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THE NEW YORKER

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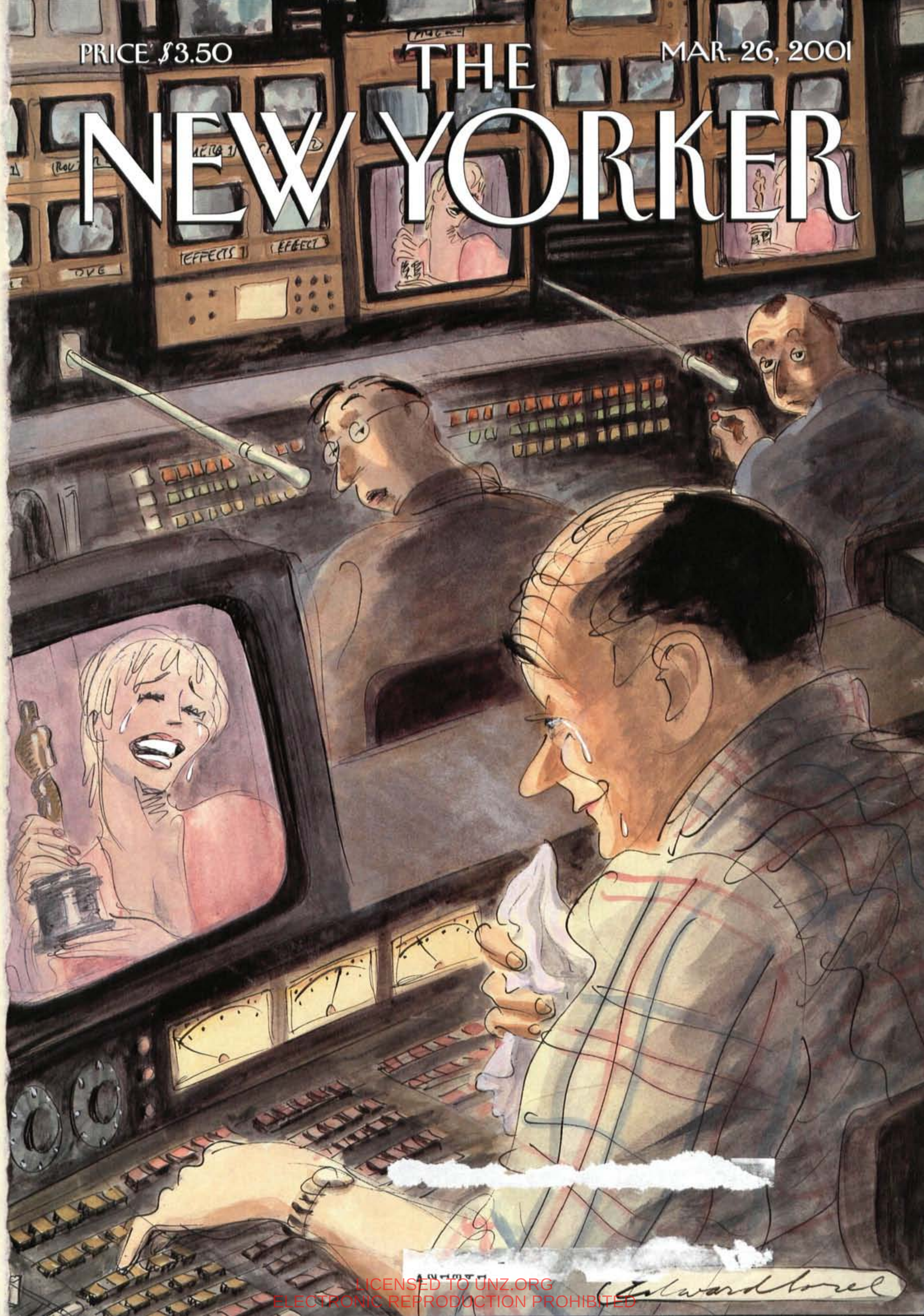
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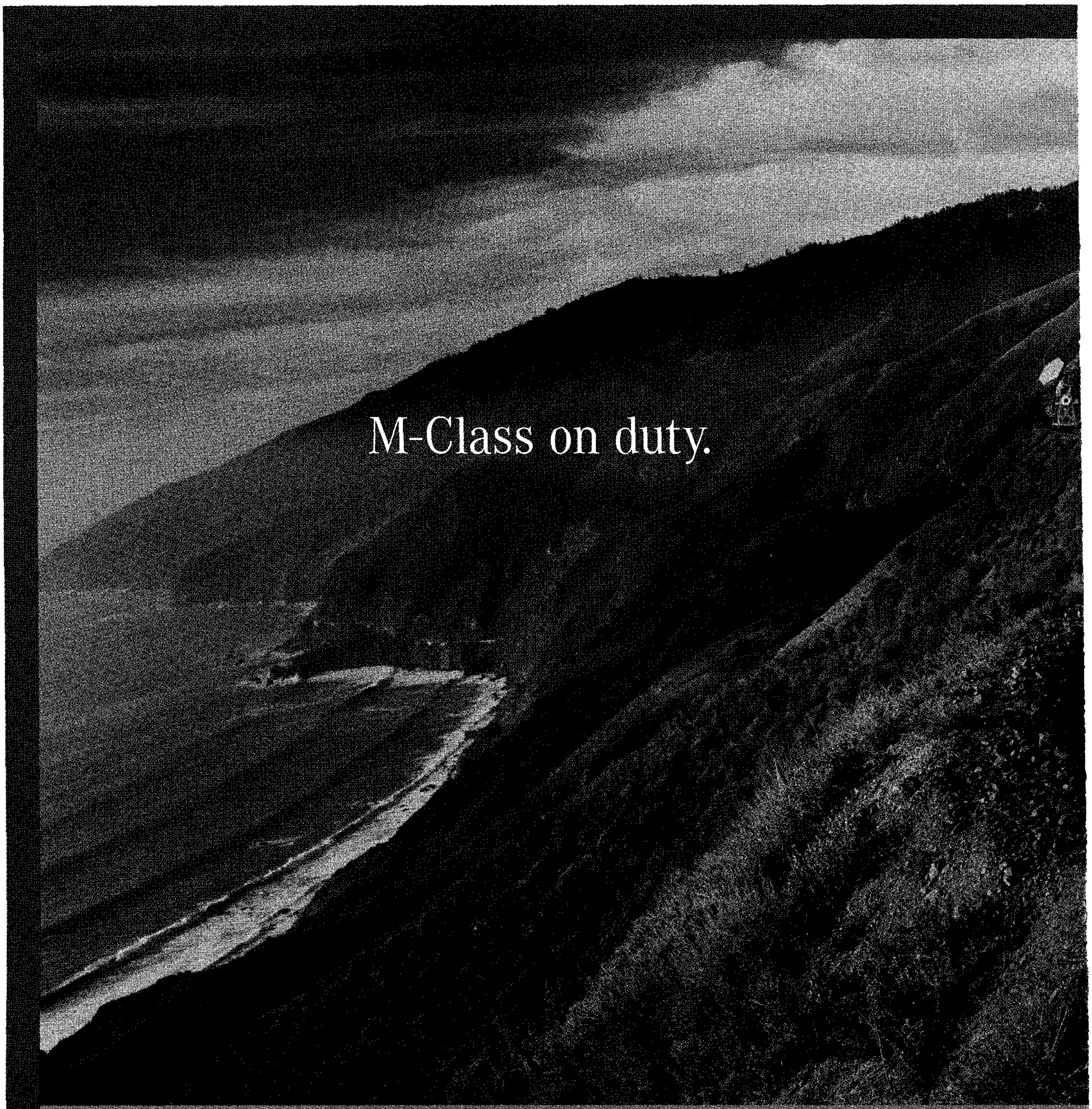

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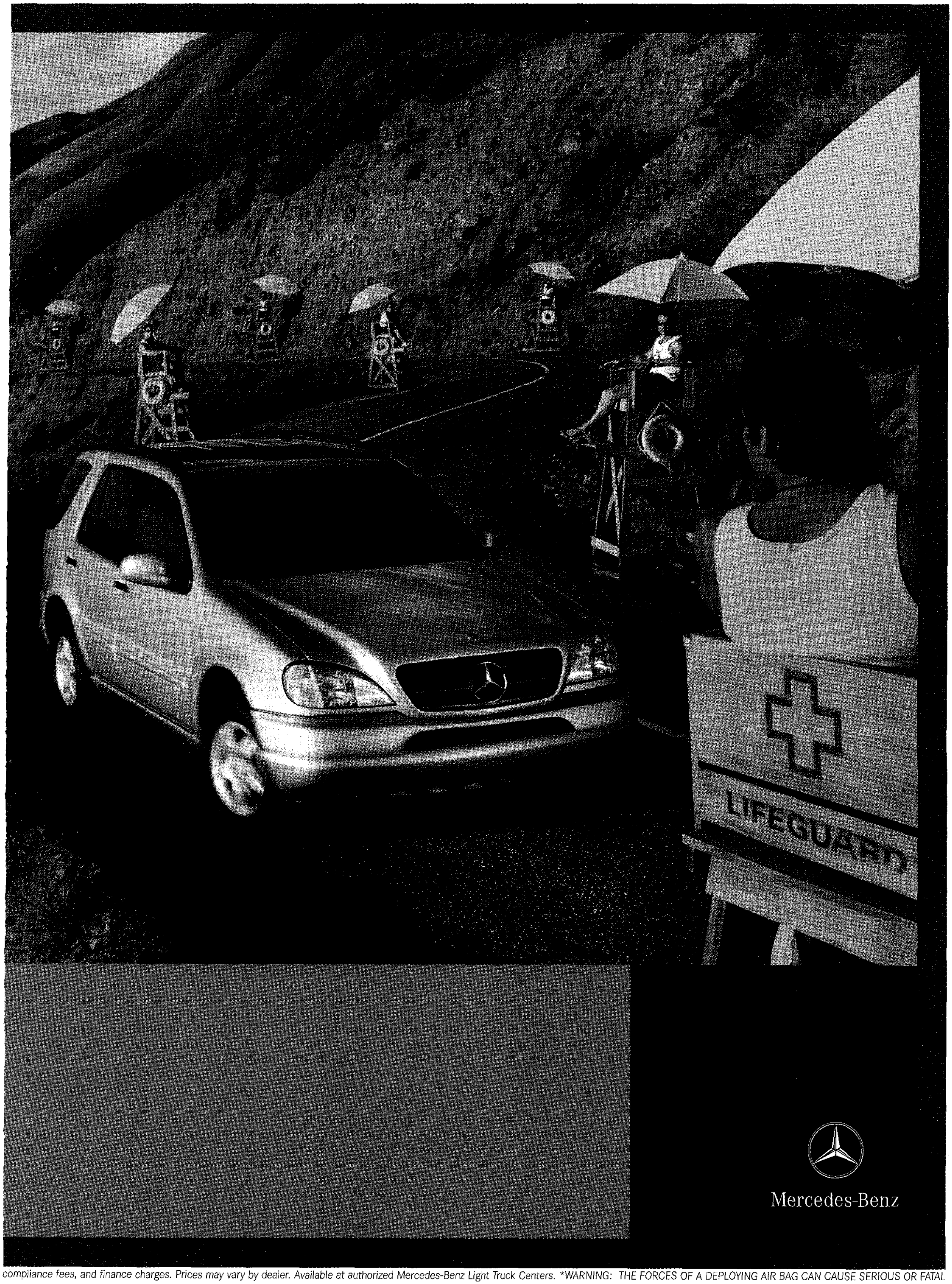

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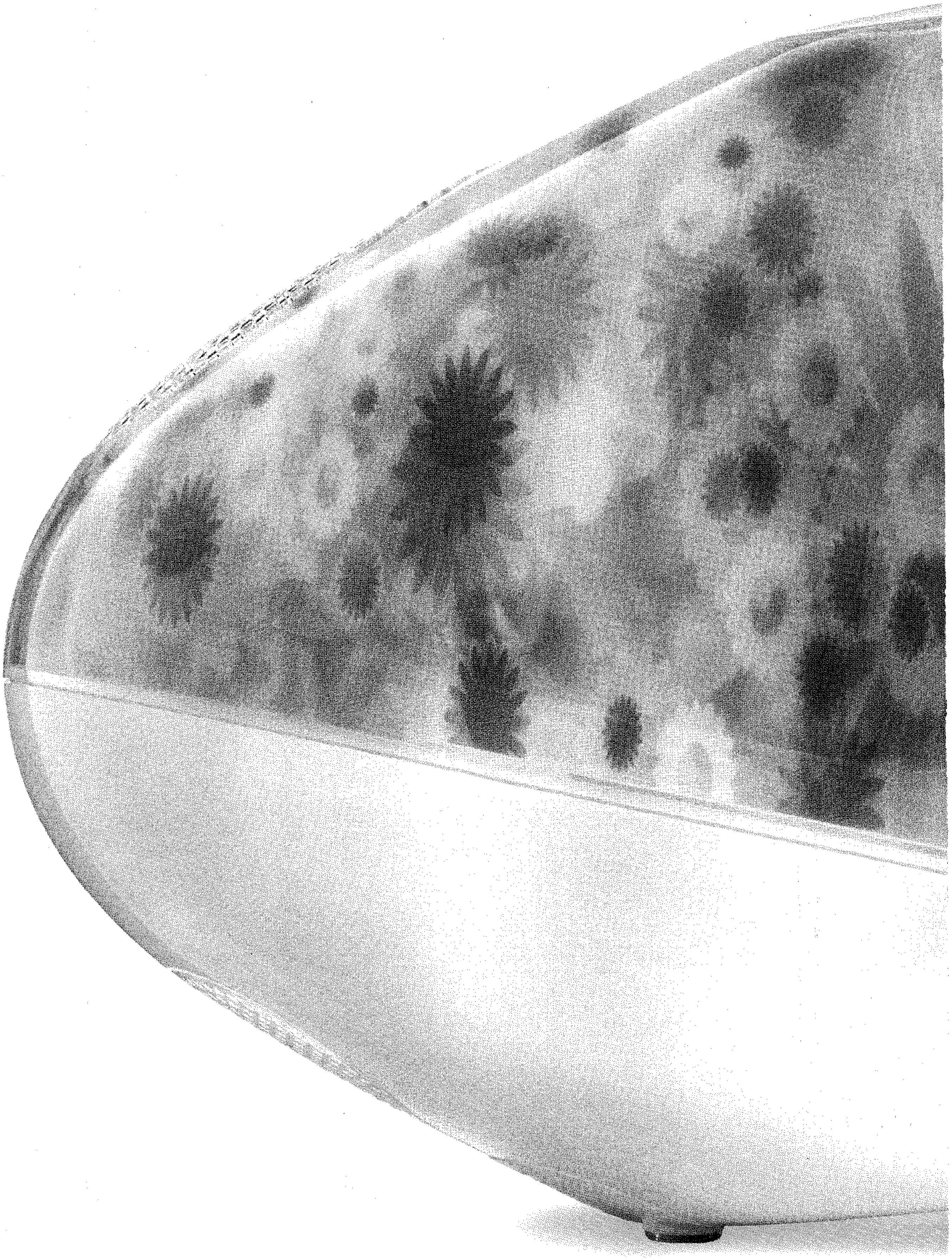

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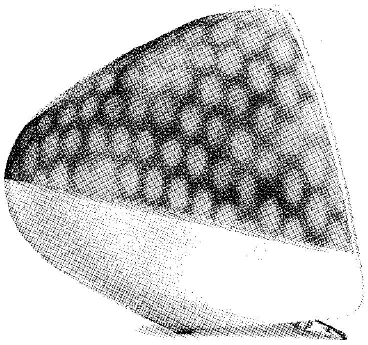

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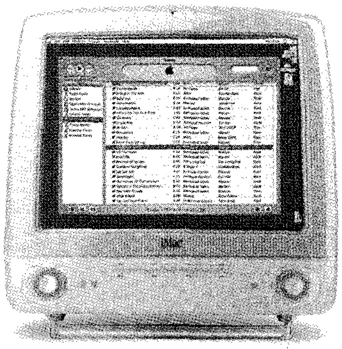

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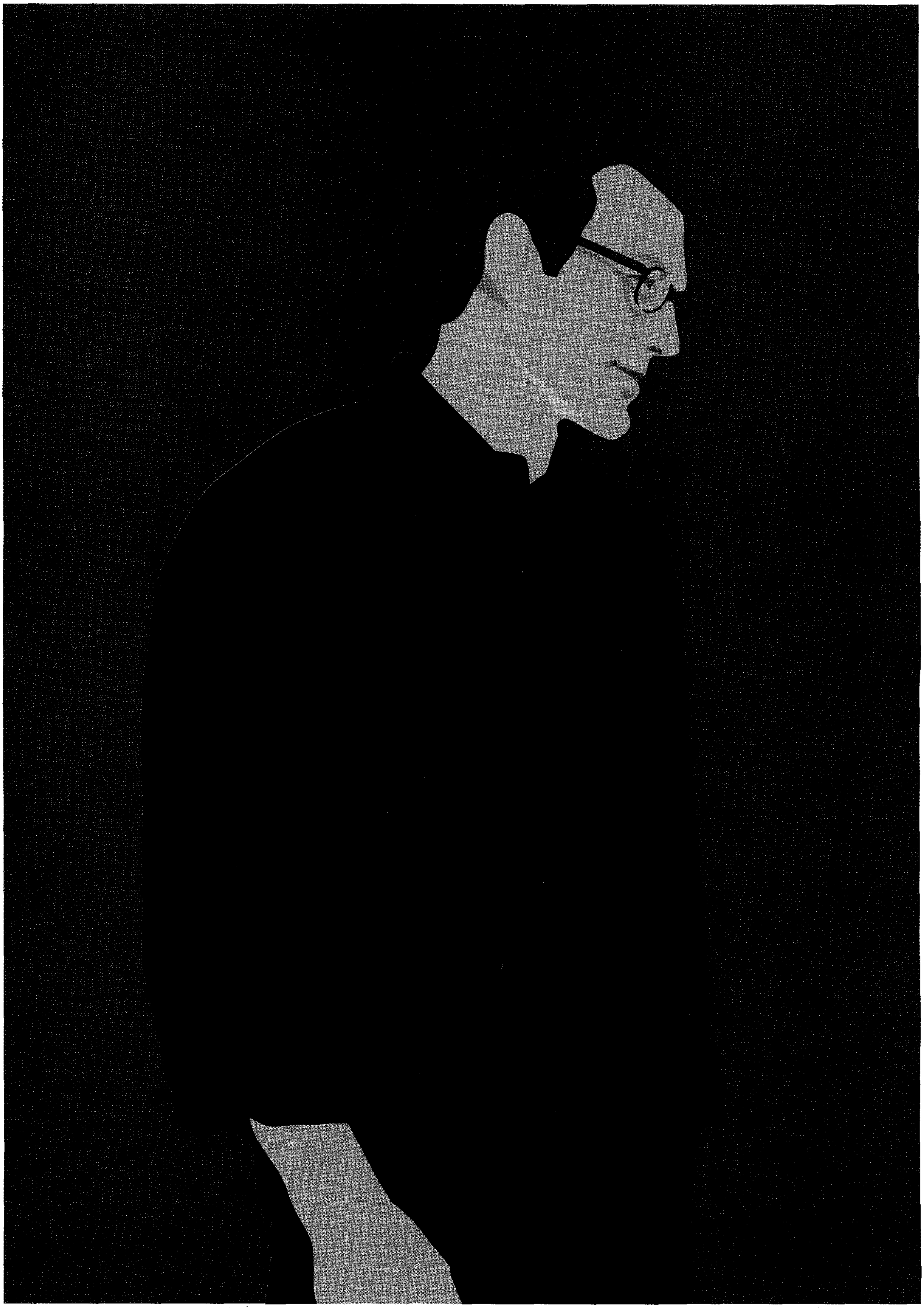

ADMIT IT, YOU'RE RICH.

Yes you.

No, it's no use looking surprised. Somewhere along life's meandering road you managed to pass that certain point, and here you are. One of them. One of those people who "normal" people whisper about, under their breath to their friends, and say politely, but with an undeniable trace of envy, "You know so-and-so, well they're pretty well off, comfortable, affluent, wealthy, rolling in it, (or simply) rich."

> "BUT I DON'T FEEL RICH!" you protest. "Why, I still hunt for bargains at the store, my favorite meal is a burger and fries, I can't remember how old my watch is, I still have to walk the dog at midnight, and the only chauffeur in our family is me."

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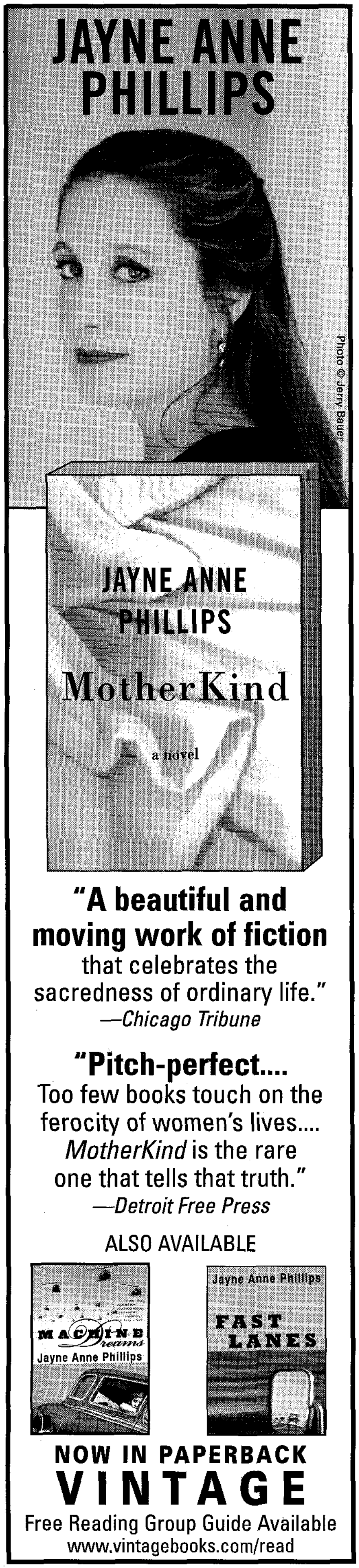
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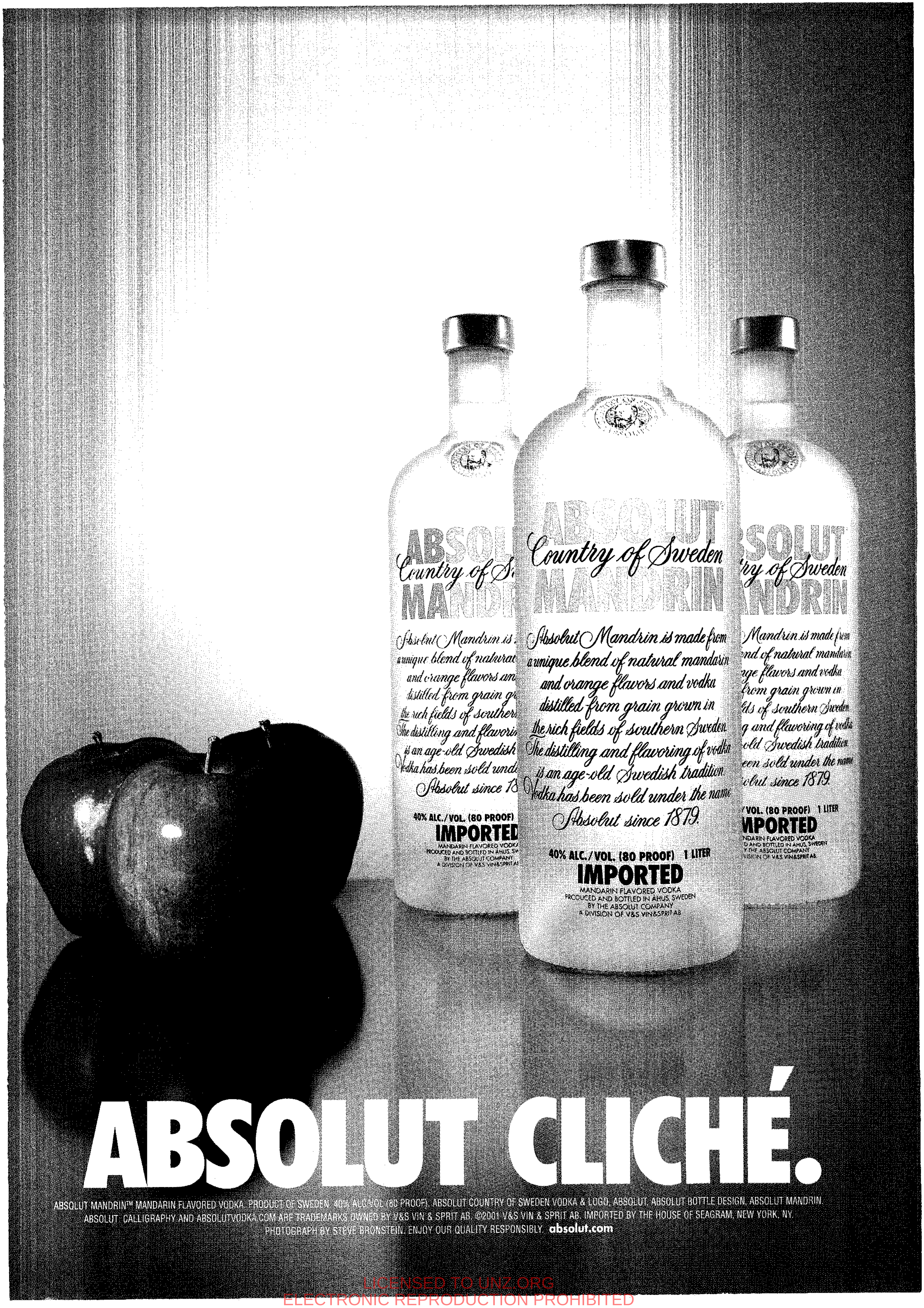
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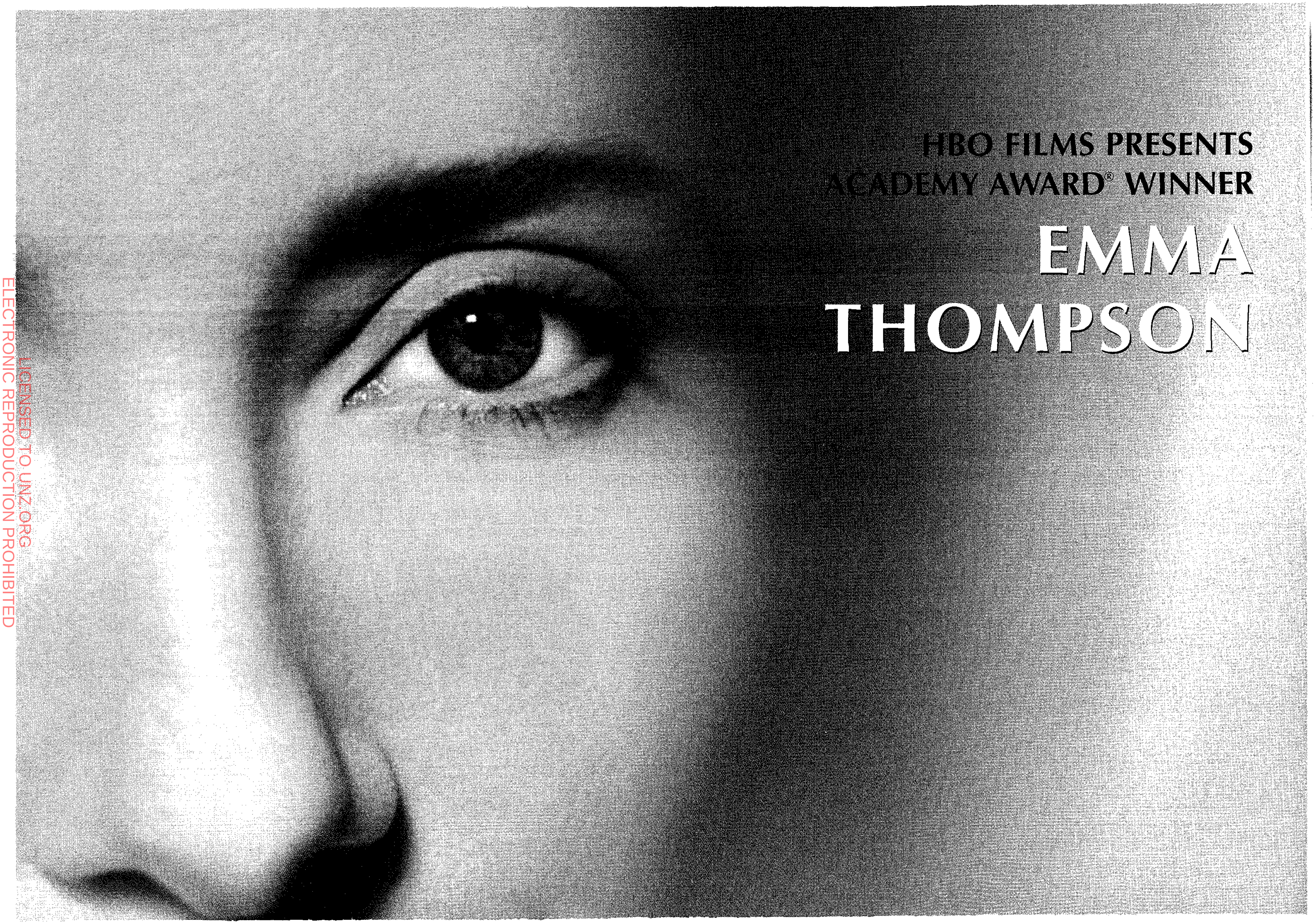
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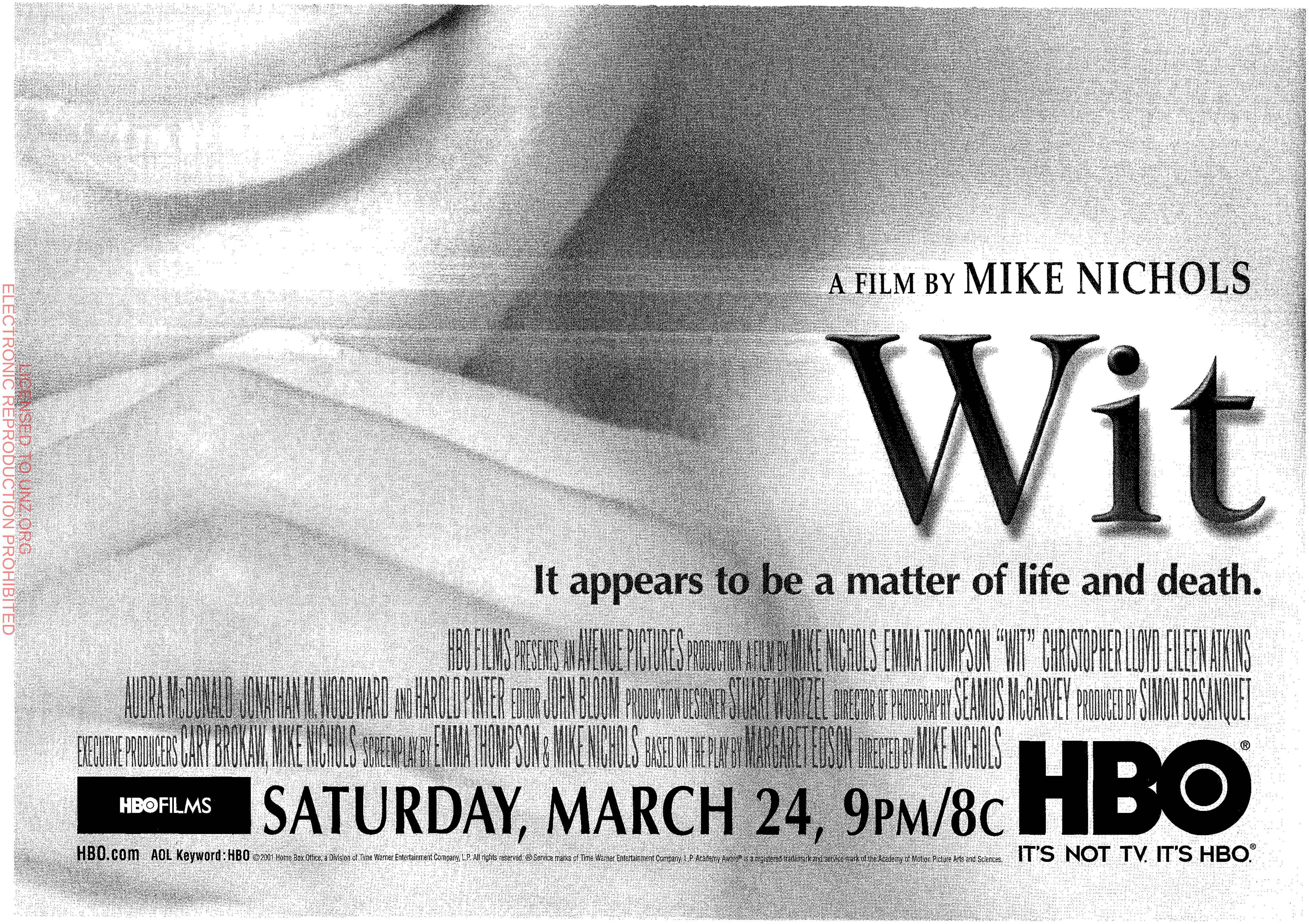A FILM BY MIKE NICHOLS

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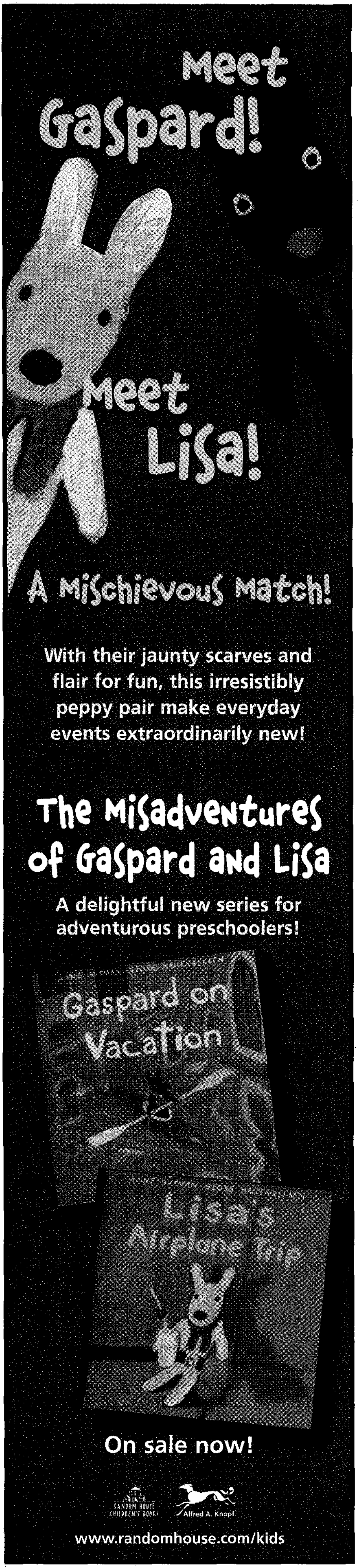
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CONTRIBUTORS

John Seabrook ("The Tree of Me," p. 58) has been a staff writer since 1993. His book "Nobrow" is out in paperback.

Ryszard Kapuscinski ("City of Nomads," p. 40) has been writing about Africa since 1957. His book on the continent, "The Shadow of the Sun," comes out next month. He lives in Warsaw.

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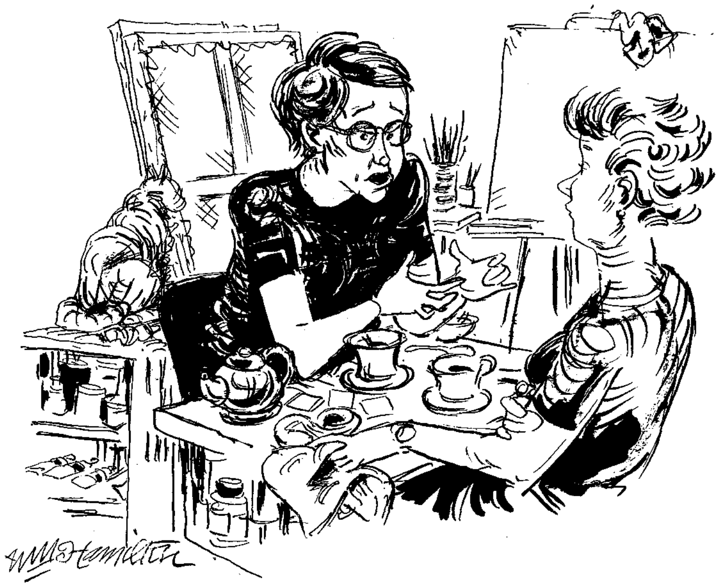
Steve Brodner (The Back Page, p. 104) received a James Aronson Award for Social Justice Journalism this year, for his satirical illustrations and art journalism. ♦



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THE MAIL

FRYING GAME

Malcolm Gladwell's suggestion that "the most elegant" way to make French fries less harmful would be to fry them in Olestra, a fat substitute, lowballs some important concerns ("The Trouble with Fries," March 5th). He mentions studies that show that Olestra does not, as feared, cause gastrointestinal problems; other studies, however, have shown that it does. Olestra is also known to inhibit the body's absorption of carotenoids, substances in fruits and vegetables that may reduce the risk of cancer. Gladwell cites Harvard researcher Walter Willett's grave concerns about the trans fats in vegetable shortenings used by fast-food restaurants—fats that may be even less healthful than the beef tallow they replaced—as evidence of how efforts to improve foods can go wrong. He didn't mention that Willett also warned the Food and Drug Administration that "the magnitude of carotenoid reduction demonstrated in controlled feeding studies of Olestra could potentially produce a large number of deaths annually and major morbidity in the U.S. population." If the question here is how to make good-tasting, healthful fries, Olestra is not the answer.

Michael F. Jacobson
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Washington, D.C.

Malcolm Gladwell replies: The concerns Jacobson raises about Olestra passed government scrutiny long ago, as witnessed by the F.D.A.'s approval of it for human consumption. This does not mean Olestra is perfect. But speculation about its gastrointestinal effects can scarcely compare with the enormous, known risks posed by the use of hydrogenated fats.

NO MORE NOAHS

Burkhard Bilger likens game ranches in Texas, on which tourists pay to shoot exotic animals, to modern-day Noah's arks, conserving species that might otherwise become extinct ("A Shot in the Ark," March 5th). In doing so, he overlooks the real difference between the ark and the ranch: the flood of people that has driven these animals out of their native habitats is never going to recede. Conservationists see animals as valuable both in themselves and as part of a living ecosystem; ranchers treat them as commercial chattel. One cannot simply pluck endangered species from the wild, fence them in, and call it conservation.

Sarah Wageman
Lake Oswego, Ore.

A POET'S FRATERNITY

Helen Vendler's evaluation of the work of James Merrill clarified the nature of his poetic achievement (Books, March 12th). The ambiguities of his character, however, remain to perplex all of us who knew him. In the late nineteen-forties, at Amherst College, my fellow Chi Psi members and I tried to persuade Merrill to join our fraternity. We considered him one of us, the bright, playwriting son of Charlie Merrill, the banker who was our fraternity's most well-regarded alumnus, and whose portrait stood on the mantel of our fireplace. Back then, we believed in the nineteenth-century ideal that the best friendships were secured within the confines of a small society, whose members, as in our case, had been sworn to secrecy. Our invitation to him was made in this spirit; he rejected it. Nor did our concerted arguments change his outspoken condemnation of our approach. We had no inkling of the secret society that he himself represented, by virtue of his homosexuality; how this diverged from the fellowship we offered; or from what new perspectives the concept of friendship would, in our century, be reimagined.

Louis R. Head
Evanston, Ill.

•

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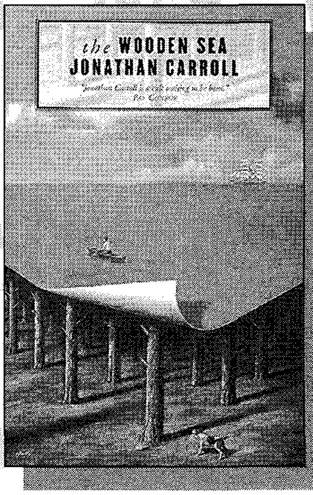

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But the real evidence of change will emerge in the powerful new ways we can earn more "thank you's" from investors who seek personalized investment solutions.

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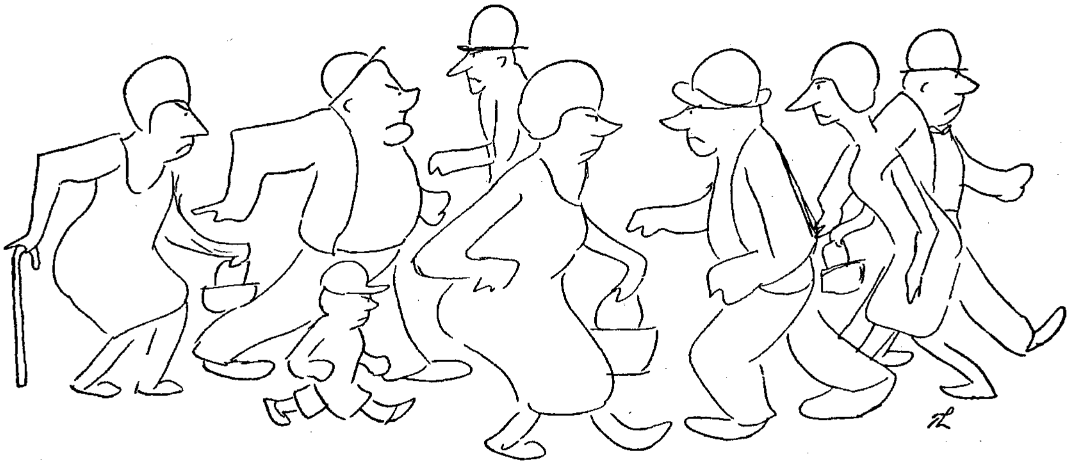


THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BELLS ARE RINGING
Faith Prince and Marc Kudisch lead the cast in a revival of the 1956 Betty Comden–Adolph Green–Jules Styne musical about a telephone operator who falls for a playwright. Tina Landau is the director. In previews. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

BLOOMER GIRL
City Center's 2001 Encores! series continues with a concert staging of Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg's 1944 musical. Five performances only: March 22-23 at 8, March 24 at 2 and 8, and March 25 at 6:30. (131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

THE BOOK OF LIZ
The Drama Dept. presents a new comedy by the Talent Family (David and Amy Sedaris), about an unappreciated nun who flees her conventional life. In previews through March 25. Opens March 26 at 8. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 239-6200.)

FOLLIES
A Roundabout Theatre Company revival of James Goldman and Stephen Sondheim's 1971 musical, starring Blythe Danner, Gregory Harrison, Judith Ivey, and Treat Williams. Matthew Warchus is the director. In previews. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE GATHERING
Will Power's one-man show blends hip-hop and African-American folklore to explore what he considers the primary meeting places for black men: the barbershop, the basketball court, the street, and the world of music. Preview on March 22. Opens March 23 at 7:30. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

THE INVENTION OF LOVE
Tom Stoppard's latest play stars Richard Easton and Robert Sean Leonard, who portray the poet A. E. Housman at the end of his life and as a young man. Jack O'Brien is the director. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG
Maximilian Schell and George Grizzard lead the cast in the Abby Mann drama. John Tillinger is the director. In previews through March 25. Opens March 26 at 6:30. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6280.)

MNEMONIC
Simon McBurney and his Théâtre de Complicité have winged it over from London to present their latest project, in which the concept of memory is explored through ostensibly unrelated stories. Previews begin March 22. (John Jay College, 899 Tenth Ave., at 58th St. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			21	22	23	24
25	26	27				

NEWYORKERS
A satirical revue about life in Manhattan, by Glenn Slater (lyrics) and Stephen Weiner (music). Christopher Ashley is the director. In previews through March 25. Opens March 27 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

NO NIGGERS, NO JEWS, NO DOGS
Primary Stages presents a new play by John Henry Redwood, about a black woman's friendship with a Jewish scholar in North Carolina in the forties. In previews. (354 W. 45th St. 333-4062.)

NUYORICAN VOICES
A trio of plays by Latino playwrights, performed in rotating repertory: "Giants Have Us in Their Books," by José Rivera; "Unmerciful Good Fortune," by Edwin Sanchez; and "Miriam's Flowers," by Migdalia Cruz. Opening on March 22, March 24, and March 25, respectively, all at 8. (INTAR, 508 W. 53rd St. 279-4200.)

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST
From Chicago, a Steppenwolf Theatre revival of Dale Wasserman's adaptation of the 1962 Ken Kesey novel, starring Gary Sinise. Terry Kinney is the director. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

PASSION PLAY
Peter Nichols' 1981 dark comedy, about a couple destroyed by an adulterous affair. In previews. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

THE PRODUCERS
Matthew Broderick and Nathan Lane star in Mel Brooks's musical version of his 1968 movie, under the direction of Susan Stroman. Previews begin March 21. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

REFERENCES TO SALVADOR DALI MAKE ME HOT
Rosie Perez portrays a lonely army wife whose husband suffers from Gulf War syndrome, in a new play by José Rivera. In previews. (Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

SERVICEMEN
From the New Group, a drama by Evan Smith, about a socialite and a playboy who frequent the hangouts of departing enlisted men in New York during the Second World War. In previews through March 24. Opens March 25 at 3. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

STARMITES 2001
A revival of the 1989 sci-fi comic-book musical by Barry Keating and Stuart Ross. Mr. Keating is the director. Preview on March 21. Opens March 22 at 8. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 206-1515.)

STONES IN HIS POCKETS
In Marie Jones's comedy, set in an Irish village during the filming of a big Hollywood movie, Seán Campion and Conleth Hill portray all the characters. Ian McElhinney is the director. Previews begin March 23. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

UP AGAINST THE WIND
New York Theatre Workshop presents a rap-poetry play about the life of Tupac Shakur, written by Michael Develle Winn. In previews. (79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

OPENED RECENTLY

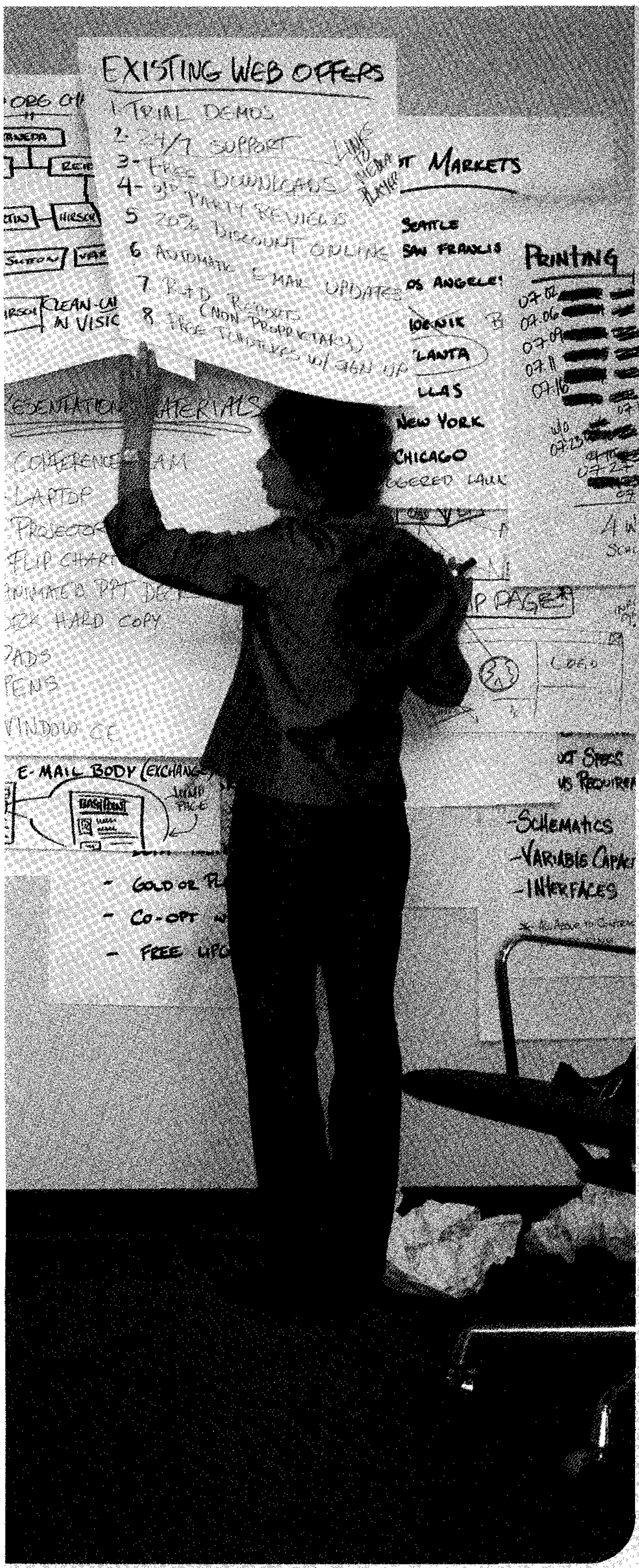
BAT BOY: THE MUSICAL
A musical inspired by a tabloid story about a half-boy, half-nocturnal flying mammal. Written by Keythe Farley and Brian Flemming, with music and lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

BOBBIE BOLAND
A former beauty queen goes into battle mode when a younger woman pursues her husband, in a comedy by Nancy Hasty set in nineteen-sixties Florida. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 279-4200.)

BOY GETS GIRL
Although Rebecca Gilman's new play begins with a blind date, this is no romance. Rather, it's a thriller, whose basic story line you've seen many times before on TV and in the movies. There are several fine performances—from Mary Beth Fisher, as a besieged magazine writer, and Howard Witt, as an incorrigible seventies pornographer—but the merits of Gilman's ideas about sexual politics are ground down under the lockstep march of the melodramatic plot. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/5/01.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

CARTAS: A NUN IN LOVE
A stage adaptation of the seventeenth-century "Lettres de la Religieuse Portugaise," said to be correspondence from a Portuguese nun to a French officer who deserted her, translated and performed by Myriam Cyr. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 529-4530.)

A CLASS ACT
Ed Kleban's life following his success as the lyricist of "A Chorus Line" is the basis of this musical.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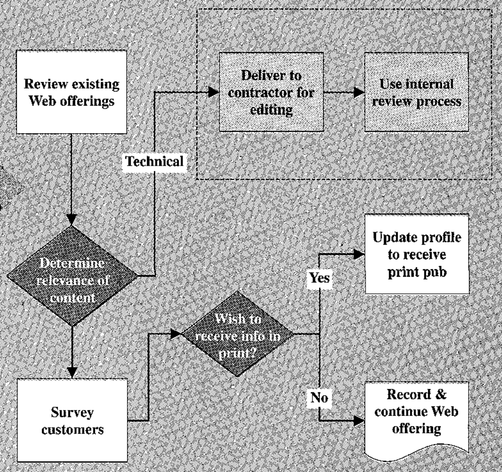
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With songs by Mr. Kleban and a book by Linda Kline and Lonny Price. Mr. Price is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

DESIGN FOR LIVING

Alan Cumming, Jennifer Ehle, and Dominic West are the dissolute trio in Noel Coward's 1932 comedy. Joe Mantello is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

THE DINNER PARTY

Neil Simon's new comedy, set in an opulent restaurant in Paris, is essentially traditional fare; the running, or limping, gags are in ready supply, and the secondhand shtick, often in the form of aeons-old alimony jokes, flows freely along this Boulevard of Broken Marriages. (11/6/00) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

DOGEATERS

In Jessica Hagedorn's adaptation of her celebrated 1990 novel, which takes place in the Philippines, political corruption and American pop culture have turned a tropical paradise into a media whispering gallery. With its delirium of talk shows, movies, beauty pageants, discos, Catholicism, and capitalism, the nation's imagination has been colonized by the West, and the indigenous has all but disappeared. Hagedorn sees the Philippines as a soap opera, and the metaphor is right. It's Michael Greif's sluggish production that is wrong. It has no racing pulse or dreamlike frenzy; instead, it's a series of plodding, adequately acted snapshots, which bring the phantasmagoric and the historical together in one heavy-handed, camp package. (3/19/01) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes March 25.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY

These days, ridiculing Broadway is like shooting fish in a barrel, so it's amazing that the latest version of Gerard Alessandrini's long-running satirical revue manages to fire off as many good ones as it does. Thank goodness the wonderful Christine Pedi is still in the show; her loopy, loving imitations of yesteryear's biggies—Elaine Stritch, Liza Minnelli, Ethel Merman, and Barbra Streisand—are more than worth the trip and the price of a ticket. (Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.)

THE FULL MONTY

Terrence McNally and David Yazbek's musical version of the 1997 movie, about a group of unemployed factory workers who try to earn some cash by stripping, has all the spirit and charm of the original but on a much larger, pizzazzier scale. If you don't find yourself laughing consistently (and tearing up occasionally), well, then, maybe you don't *deserve* to see six men prancing around in red G-strings. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

THE GOOD THIEF

Brian D'Arcy James portrays a petty criminal who botches a heist, in a drama by Conor McPherson. (José Quintero Theatre, 534 W. 42nd St. 560-7284.)

HIGH DIVE

In her one-woman comedy, Leslie Ayvazian uses a vacation in Greece, during which she attempted to jump off a high diving board, as, quite literally, a springboard to discuss her life, career, and family as she approaches fifty. Ayvazian has an exuberant demeanor, and her crisp comic delivery only enhances the play's many charms (which include riffs on disastrous vacations and her obsession with "The $25,000 Pyramid"). On top of it all, Ayvazian gives audience members the opportunity to read minor roles from their seats, which lends this show a fresh, improvisational quality that many solo pieces lack. (MCC Theatre, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes March 25.)

IF IT WAS EASY . . .

In Ward Morehouse III and Stewart F. Lane's backstage comedy, the Mob offers hard-to-refuse financial help to the producers of a show called "Sinatra: The Musical." (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

IN DREAMS AND GIMPEL

An evening of plays adapted from two short stories, Isaac Bashevis Singer's "Gimpel the Fool" and Delmore Schwartz's "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," both starring David Margulies. (Maverick, 307 W. 26th St. 239-6200.)

ISN'T IT ROMANTIC

The Worth Street Theatre Company's staging of Wendy Wasserstein's 1983 comedy, directed by Jeff Cohen. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St., at West Broadway. 206-1515. Closes April 1.)

I WILL BEAR WITNESS

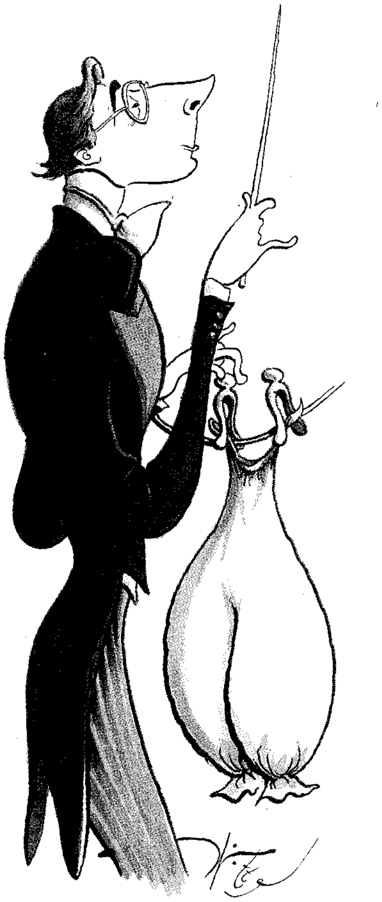
A stage version of the diaries of Victor Klemperer, a German Jew who recorded his life under the Third Reich. George Bartenieff, who portrays Klemperer, and Karen Malpede, who directs, collaborated on the adaptation. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes April 1.)

JANE EYRE

John Caird and Paul Gordon's musical is respectful of and faithful to Brontë's original, but it needs to be brilliant and piercing, and it isn't. Though the show's book is a fair job, the music is schmaltzy, and the modern stage devices—the endless projections of trees and sky may make you feel like you're watching the Weather Channel—don't quite bring Brontë to life. The appealing cast is led by Marla Schaffel, who is the very picture of the Jane Eyre in your mind's eye. Directed by Mr. Caird and Scott Schwartz. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

LOBBY HERO

A new play by Kenneth Lonergan, about a security guard, his supervisor, two cops, and a murder investigation. Mark Brokaw is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)



Rob Fisher, the Encores! series music director, conducts "Bloomer Girl."

MOMMA

In her one-woman show, Siobhan Fallon portrays a bus driver from rural New York who travels to Manhattan to visit a fertility herbalist. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes March 24.)

NOW THAT COMMUNISM IS DEAD, MY LIFE FEELS EMPTY

Richard Foreman's forty-eighth play has many of the whacked-out elements audiences have come to expect from the father of downtown theatre—a disorienting set loaded with veiled signifiers, nubile women whose semi-sadomasochistic garb is offset by intellectual-nerd glasses; a gorilla; an outright air of menace; and characters who seem both alienated and—especially lately—somehow perfectly at home in it all. Foreman's plays used to be an enigmatic, exhilarating blow to the brain. With this latest work, the formula has got so comfortable that it seems like shtick. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY

In Edward Albee's new play, an older couple provide a harsh taste of what life has in store for a young couple with a new baby: the ravages of adulthood, the tidal wave of troubles and injuries that come with time. Brian Murray and Marian Seldes, two veterans who are rarely less than riveting, make the most of Albee's sharp, enigmatic writing; their highly stylized, virtuosic performances here are stunning. David Esbjornson directed. (2/19 & 26/01) (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

PROOF

The young playwright David Auburn's drama about the possible link between genius and mental illness stars Mary-Louise Parker as the daughter of a brilliant but unstable University of Chicago mathematician. Parker's character appears to have similar gifts and, possibly, similar troubles. Auburn has real depth and a real voice, and he has taken on some biggies here, but in the end you wish the play were a little richer, a little less simply resolved. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

Rather than a revival of Richard O'Brien's 1973 musical, a glam tribute to fifties horror flicks, Christopher Ashley's production is an unsexy and oddly earnest homage to the 1975 cult-movie adaptation. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

SCHADENFREUDE

The Chicago troupe, performing sketch comedy. March 23-25 at 10:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE

Lily Tomlin is back on Broadway in the one-woman, thirteen-character show written for her by her longtime collaborator, Jane Wagner, and what's not to love about that? Tomlin is terrific—moving, funny, and as lithe and vibrant as she was when she first performed the show here, fifteen years ago. This is a chance to see a remarkable life force in action. (11/27/00) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SEUSSICAL

For all the whimsy of Theodor Geisel's doggerel, what's missing in this relentlessly cute musical by the team of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty is mayhem and magic. With the exception of one gentle and winning performance—by Kevin Chamberlin as Horton the Elephant, who gets conned into hatching an egg—it's a show with curiously little charm. (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

A SKULL IN CONNEMARA

The middle play in Martin McDonagh's Leenane trilogy (which includes "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" and "The Lonesome West," both previously seen in New York). Like the others, it is permeated by violence, decay, death, and humor—humor that, in this case, is predominantly of the patronizing, stage-Irish variety and saturated in alcohol. Gordon Edelstein directed. (3/5/01) (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

SUBURB

In Robert Cohen and David Javerbaum's musical, Stuart (James Ludwig) wants to leave Manhattan for the suburbs, but his wife (Jacquelyn Piro) is not so sure. It's hard to tell whether the authors intended to write a satire on the cultural divide between city and country or a relationship drama, and the cloying ballads and up-tempo songs about house buying, mallgoing, and lawn mowing inadvertently make a case for staying in—or even moving to—New York City. Only Alix Korey, as a sharky real-estate agent, overcomes the saccharine material. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 239-6200. Closes March 25.)

MICHAEL WITTE

THE SYRINGA TREE
A tour-de-force solo drama, written by and starring South African native and first-time playwright Pamela Gien, who gives an extraordinary performance in all twenty-three roles. It's a love story, really, about the strong, lasting bond between a white girl and her black nanny in South Africa during apartheid. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
As Marjorie Taub, an Upper West Side culture vulture on the verge of a nervous breakdown, the dexterous Linda Lavin makes Charles Busch's satire of New York intellectual angst dazzle. In her pretentiousness, however, she is a gaudy incarnation of the boulevard's contempt for ideas. In fact, as Marjorie herself admits, she has never had "even one original thought." In this piece of slick flimflam, there is attitude but no character, laughter but no insight, action but no plot, suffering but no pain. What we have here, in other words, is a Broadway hit. (3/20/00) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

TEN UNKNOWNS
In Jon Robin Baitz's cunning and elegant play, Donald Sutherland portrays Malcom Raphelson, a hard-drinking seventy-two-year-old figurative painter, who has been holed up in retreat from the art world for twenty-eight years, and Justin Kirk his shaggy, mordant assistant, a "past master in squandered gifts," who is taking a break from "heroin, Ecstasy, show people" to babysit the artist and keep him working. Sutherland's blocked artist, suddenly faced with the prospect of a retrospective and looming fame, raises fascinating issues about symbiosis and envy. Thanks to the marvellous cast (which includes Julianna Margulies and Denis O'Hare), the unassuming authority of Daniel Sullivan's direction, and Baitz's own deft storytelling, the audience is conned into sympathizing with Raphelson the same way that the envious trick themselves into not seeing their own vicious feelings. (3/19/01) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THEATRE OF LIGHT
After a while, the themeless pieces in Rudi Stern's symphony of light, puppetry, and sound (his designs in the nineteen-sixties accompanied Timothy Leary's Psychedelic Celebrations and concerts by the Doors) become repetitive. But when all their elements come together the effect is undeniably entrancing, and would no doubt be enhanced by mind-altering substances. (Flamboyan Theatre, Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St., between Delancey and Rivington Sts. 279-4200. Closes March 31.)

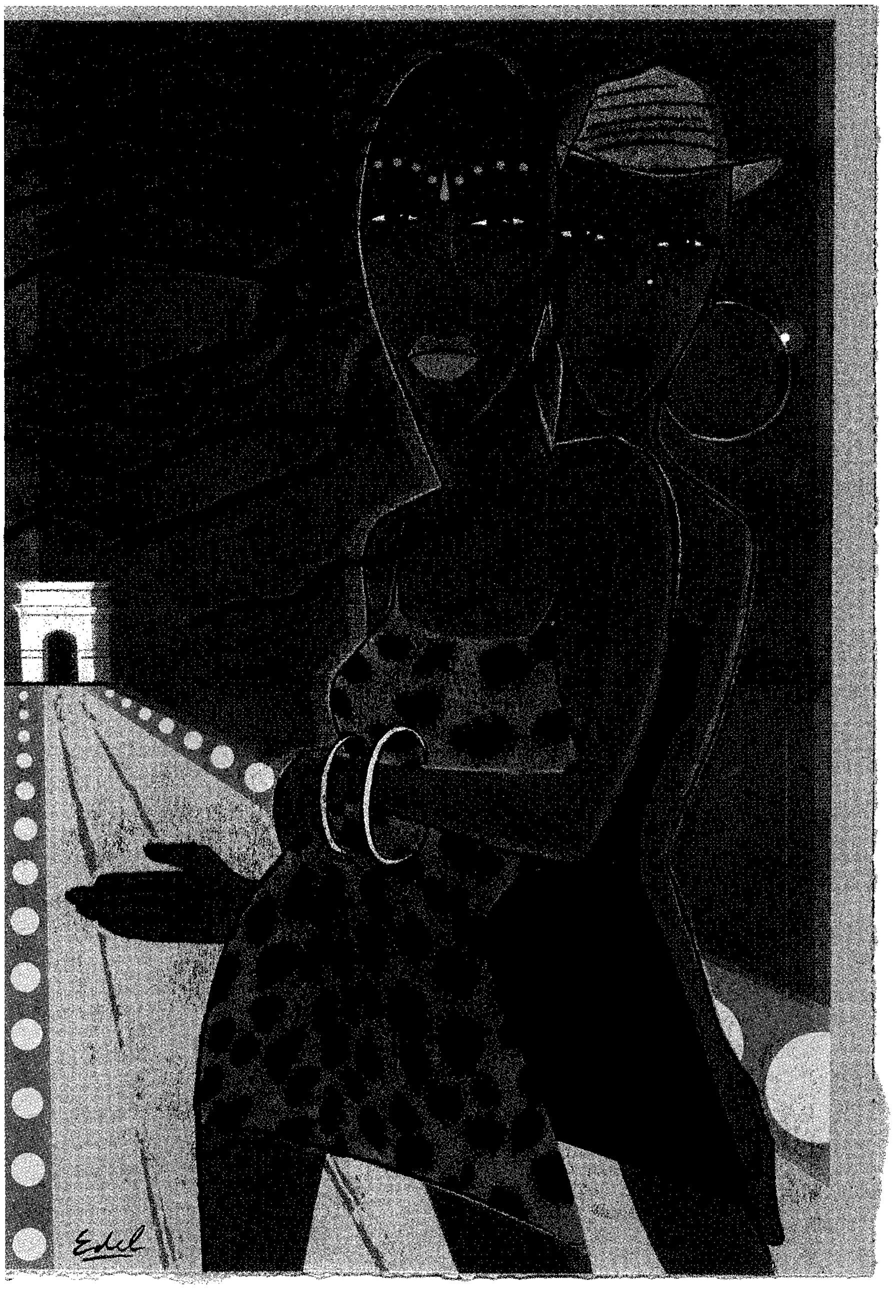
URBAN ZULU MAMBO
Regina Taylor is the sole actress in this trio of piercing one-acts, which she conceived as a tribute to the black playwright Adrienne Kennedy. Taylor portrays a sharp-minded homeless woman who nonetheless converses with her dog, in "Talking to Jupiter," by Suzan-Lori Parks; an artist who idealizes a male subject from afar, in "Liliane," by Ntozake Shange; and a woman with cancer caused by a waste incinerator in her neighborhood, in Kia Corthron's "Safe Box." Taylor's electric performances, combined with the production's vivid and haunting sound, video, and lighting design, make each play a powerful experience. (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes March 25.)

DANCE

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP
The company concludes its three-week Brooklyn season with Morris's full-length work "L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato," for twenty-four dancers, forty singers, and an orchestra. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. March 22-24 at 7:30 and March 25 at 3.)

ELIOT FELD/BALLET TECH
The company, one of the co-founders of the Joyce Theatre, returns for its spring season, performing eighteen repertory works in five weeks, with guest appearances by Damian Woetzel, Donlin Foreman, and Buffy Miller. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. March 20-23 at 8, March 24 at 2 and 8, and March 25 at 2. Through April 22.)

EDEL RODRIGUEZ



The French sisters known as Les Nubians, at S.O.B.'s (see Night Life—Clubs).

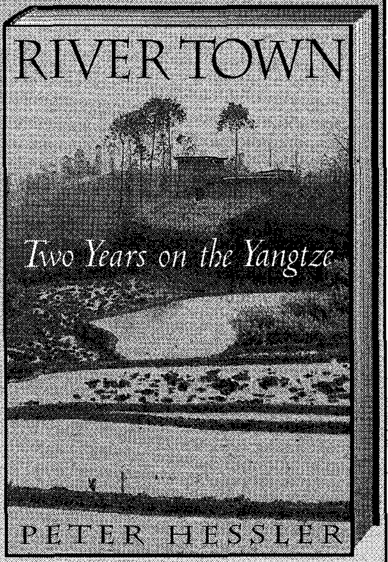
"WIND (THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME)"
When the choreographer DD Dorvillier and her Human Future Dance Corps are working out a new piece, "sometimes we choose to get back to where we started, and sometimes we stay where we end up," she says. In their new work, this process has yielded a mound of wriggling dancers in lacy "dinosaur-egg-blue" bodysuits, a tough-talking cowgirl riding a huge horseshoe of silk flowers, a wall of TV monitors and synthetic breasts, and spoken passages that shift abruptly from the matter-of-fact to the metaphoric. Time-share arrangements from Greek myth blow through the Surrealist landscape. When the mortal Castor dies, Zeus lets his twin, the divine Pollux, bring him to Mount Olympus, but only if the brothers spend every other day in Hades. Dorvillier says, "I like the idea that to live in the land of the gods, you have to also live with the dead." (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. March 21-24 at 8.)

"A CELEBRATION OF DANCE"
Risa Steinberg offers an overview of dance that spans nearly a century, with solo works by the choreographers Isadora Duncan ("The Bacchanale," from 1907), Doris Humphrey ("Two Ecstatic Themes," from 1931), José Limón ("A Choreographic Offering"), Anna Sokolow ("Kaddish"), Mark Morris, Wally Cardona, and Ann Carlson, among others. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. March 22-24 at 8:30 and March 25 at 7:30.)

"HURRY UP AND RELAX"
Choreographers, Ink, founded by Jennifer Edwards and Jeanne Schickler, present the title work as well as "Pixels," "Fishes in My Belly," and "One-Breasted President." (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 675-4812. March 23 at 9 and March 24 at 8.)

"PARTY"
The twelve-member Dutch company Introdans performs works by Hans Van Manen, Ton Wiggers, David Parsons, Conny Janssen, and Daniel Ezralow. The works include "Catch!," in which the dancers juggle glowing balls, and "Sleep Study," a work that takes its movement from the tossing, turning, and yawning of sleep. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 223-3077. March 23 at 7, March 24 at 2 and 7, and March 25 at noon and 5. Through April 1.)

SECOND AVENUE DANCE COMPANY
Students in the dance program of N.Y.U.'s Tisch School of the Arts offer their thesis concert, with



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commissioned works and reconstructions by Paul Taylor, Bill T. Jones, Tere O'Connor, and Marjorie Mussman. (111 Second Ave., at 6th St. 998-1982. March 22-23 and March 25-26 at 8 and March 24 at 2 and 8.)

"TIMBERLINE"
The all-female squad Lava excels at circus skills: trapeze, tumbling, hoop diving, tightrope walking. The choreographer Sarah East Johnson gives the extravaganza the dynamics of an evening-length dance. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. March 21-23 and March 25 at 8:30 and March 24 at 4 and 8:30. Through March 25.)

"THE TREE OF EGOS"
In the shelter of a tree set center stage, the Osaka-based Keiko Fujii Dance Company enacts the story of a woman who kills her sister and then finds redemption in a dream. (Kaye Playhouse, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. March 24 at 8.)

"BAMBOO FOREST"
The New York-based Saeko Ichinohe Dance Company blends contemporary and traditional Japanese performance styles in "Bamboo Forest," in which the dancers portray various parts of the tree, and "Heian." (Theatre of the Riverside Church, W. 120th St. at Riverside Dr. 757-2531. March 23 at 8 and March 24 at 2 and 7.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

JEFF BECK
A permanent member of the guitar-hero pantheon, Beck honed his considerable chops in the seminal British band the Yardbirds before venturing out on his own with the Jeff Beck Group (which counted Rod Stewart and future Rolling Stone Ron Wood in its ranks). He's currently out to promote his new solo album, "You Had It Coming," on which he explores new technology to augment his acclaimed blues-based fret work. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. March 22-23 at 8.)

"POPS: THE AMBASSADOR OF SWING"
The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis pay tribute to Louis Armstrong. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. March 22 and March 24 at 8.) ♦ On their night off the orchestra's players head downtown to the Hammerstein Ballroom for a dance concert featuring the music of Count Basie. (Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 721-6500.)

ORRIN EVANS
It's been hard to keep track of fine young jazz pianists without a scorecard lately, but Evans stands out. Fresh ideas and a commitment to substance over flash give him an edge; the bassist Eric Revis and the exceptionally gifted drummer Nasheet Waits are his sidemen here. (Jazz Gallery, 290 Hudson St., near Spring St. 242-1063. March 23 at 9 and 10:30.)

"WALL TO WALL MILES DAVIS"
Testing the proposition that there can never be too much Miles Davis music being played at any given time, Symphony Space presents an all-day Milesfest featuring scores of both younger players and veterans, all touched by the sound of one of the most important jazz figures of the past fifty years. With, among many, many others, Bobby Previte, Dave Douglas, Don Byron, Jimmy Cobb, Joe Lovano, and Wallace Roney, this free event is a reminder of why it's good to live in New York City. (Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. March 24, from noon to midnight.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—March 22: Practicing an accessible, poppy take on reggae, **Maxi Priest** has made a few dents in the charts over the years, most notably with his cover of Cat Stevens' folk-rock standard "Wild World" and his collaboration with dancehall/rap star Shaggy on "That Girl." March 23-24: Reach out and they'll still be there: the **Four Tops** have been going strong for close to fifty years.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—March 22: Paris's **Tahiti 80** makes timeless pop as refreshing as a cool apéritif. March 23: Allegedly the new millennium's answer to Iggy & the Stooges, the **Strokes** are a band of youngsters who aim to revive the sound of vintage C.B.G.B.'s punk rock. If the buzz about them is to believed, they're actually getting away with it. March 24: Glasgow's **Idlewild** offers a night of ear-cleaning revival punk. With **Brassy**, a Manchester quartet led by John Spencer's sister Muffin which mixes hip-hop and punk rock.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S.
73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—The West Side stylist **Luther (Guitar, Jr.) Johnson** stops by March 23-24 with songs from his latest release, "Talkin' About Soul."

TABLES FOR TWO

OLIVES
(W Hotel, 201 Park Ave. S. 353-8345)—Todd English, one of Boston's most celebrated chefs, escaped the kind of heavy-duty hazing that Manhattanites gave last year's other big-shot culinary crasher, France's Alain Ducasse. Maybe there was some confusion involving the insidious Olive Garden chain, or maybe expectations just weren't that high for Mediterranean food from Beantown.

As it turns out, English's worst enemy is not gastronomic snobbery but his own interior decorator, David Rockwell, who seems to have ordered the patchwork-quilt-themed décor from an out-of-date Pottery Barn catalogue. Overwrought candelabras and droopy blown-glass pod lights make for a strictly suburban fantasy of fanciness. And the place might as well be out of town—its location in the W hotel, a block north of Union Square, draws L.A. suntans at lunch and heavily made-up Europeans at dinner.

The food, however, is another story. English's mix-and-match Mediterranean flavor scheme is so balanced that he's free to hit every note as hard as he wants. A Spartan squid-and-octopus dish comes loaded with garlic and parsley and has enough of a smoky charring to explain the shrine-like presence of the rotisserie, which is spotlighted behind glass. English knows that no lightweight ever ordered raw hamburger, so he turns his *carne cruda* into a roundhouse punch with richly truffled beef and a quail-egg yolk. One rustic appetizer—the signature tart of olives, goat cheese, caramelized onions, and anchovies—is such perfect picnic food that it feels absurd to be eating it indoors. Another, the lobster falafel, isn't going to put Moshe's Forty-sixth Street cart out of business, but the experiment is perversely exciting.

The entrées include an osso bucco that contains a daunting amount of marrow, and braised-rabbit lasagna, which comes in a high-test white-wine reduction (it's siesta-inducing at lunch). Even the vegetables that accompany the Chilean sea bass are roasted with a powerful country ham that threatens to take over the plate.

All this bravado is exhilarating—it's good to know that your chef has no fear of flavor—but it can wear out the most dogged diner. (Just reading the menu is exhausting—ingredients get spun, shaved, showered, whipped, wrapped, and shucked.) By the time dessert rolls around, many are likely to feel sated—and too spent to contemplate the peppermint bombe or the oven-roasted pineapple. (Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Entrées $23-$30.)

—*Owen Phillips*

CUTTING ROOM
19 W. 24th St. (691-1900)—March 23: The former Bongos front man **Richard Barone** joins the singer-songwriter **Amy Rigby** for an acoustic show.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—March 22: The veteran Jamaican dub specialist and studio wizard **Lee (Scratch) Perry.** March 23: The good vibes keep flowing with the reggae star **Luciano.** March 24: For the first time since 1980, the surrealistic popster Robyn Hitchcock has reconvened his punk-era band, the **Soft Boys.** More influenced by Syd Barrett-era Pink Floyd than the Sid Vicious-era Sex Pistols, the stridently psychedelic Soft Boys were likely to be found singing about bees, chickens, and Anglepoise lamps, and their jangle-pop sound has influenced guitar-rock bands from R.E.M. onward.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—March 23: Robyn Hitchcock and the **Soft Boys** (see Irving Plaza). March 26: **Brassy** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—March 23: At most weddings, if the groom has too much to drink and starts singing, the only things that endure are awkward memories. In the case of the Lower East Side misfits **Speedball Baby,** however, the story has a happy ending. The lead singer Ron Ward, who at the time was the drummer in an outfit called Blood Oranges, formed this band when he picked up the microphone in a moment of intoxicated euphoria at his own reception. Among the guests was the Madder Rose bassist Matt Verta-Ray, who joined the performance. The next day Verta-Ray signed up for the band, taking over the lead guitar. Over the past few years, Speedball Baby has put out a string of EPs and a couple of full-length albums, and has refined its antic and funky cocktail of rockabilly and roots rock. Think of them as a less media-addled Blues Explosion.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—March 22: **Les Nubians.** The sisters Hélène and Celia Faussart, who were raised in Bordeaux (with a brief sojourn in Chad), reconfigure American hip-hop and jazz with a severe Continental chic. The duo's sophisticated styling does for pop music what Catherine Deneuve did for umbrellas. Dining.

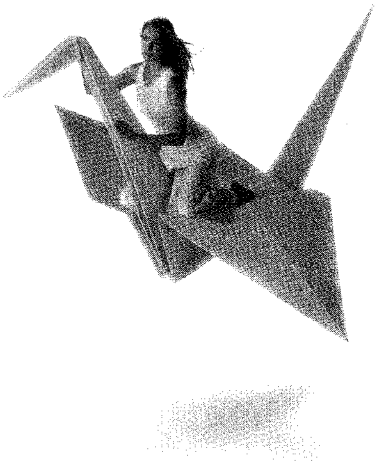
TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—March 24: **New Wet Kojak,** the oddly named offshoot of the more conventionally punky band Girls Against Boys, uses honking saxophones, rocking guitars, and bass, along with loops and samples, to create a frenetic mesh of indie rock, skewed jazz music, and other styles. What started as a lighthearted experiment has expanded into a going concern that has taken on a life of its own.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—March 23: Born above a Philadelphia church in 1936, **Solomon Burke** became known early in life as the Wonder Boy Preacher. In 1964, on the strength of such songs as "If You Need Me" and "Cry to Me," he was crowned the King of Rock and Soul. He never gave up the crown (even as he sired twenty-one children and moved to California to open a chain of mortuaries), and this year the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame will induct him as a member.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through March 24: For those who find Cassandra Wilson too moodily exotic, Diana Krall a bit distant and chilly, and such excellent veteran vocalists as Abbey Lincoln and Shirley Horn, well, too experienced, there's the fresh-faced **Jane Monheit.** The Long Island native has a sweet, sure voice and a taste for tried-and-true standards. Dining.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—March 21: The **Jimmy Greene** quintet. What the tenor saxophon-



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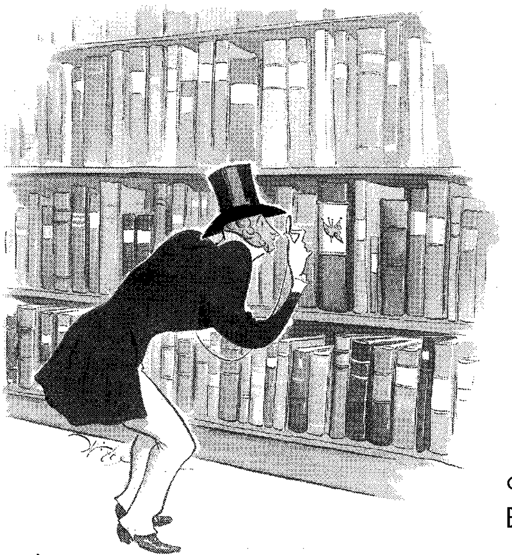

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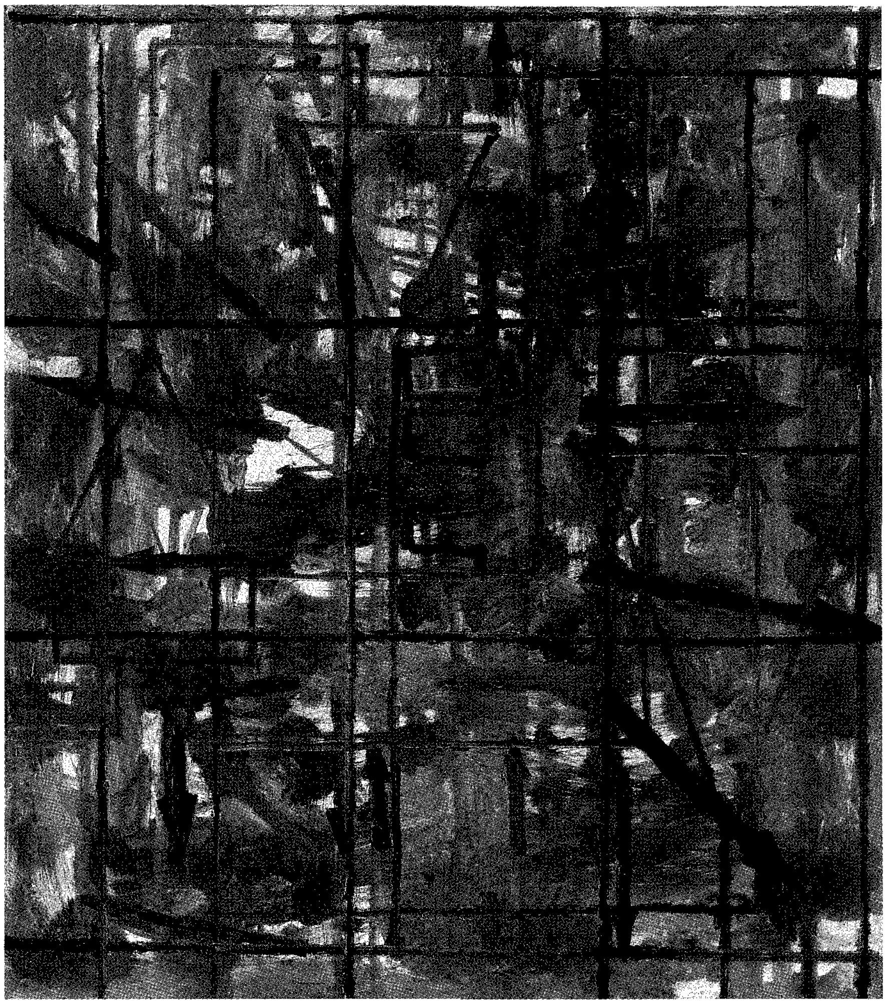


"Set Diagram/52," by Terry Winters, at Lehmann Maupin.

ist Greene has going for him—an apprenticeship with the hard-bop architect Horace Silver—can't be bought at any price. Greene was all over Silver's delightful 1999 album, "Jazz Has a Sense of Humor," displaying a full-throated tone full of promise. He's a straightforward neo-bop player whose conviction helps him stand out in the crowd. March 22-24: The **Peter Bernstein** quartet. Bernstein, one of the more compelling second-generation soul-jazz guitarists, has lent his bluesy energy to such venerable R.-&-B. players as Lou Donaldson. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through March 25: **Bill Frisell**, the most intriguingly persuasive guitarist of his generation, and **Ron Carter**, the venerable bassist, have been collaborating lately on recordings (Frisell's current release, "Blues Dream," even has a track entitled "Ron Carter"), but a live partnership is an unexpected treat. On the second half of this double bill, the guitarist presents his latest quartet, which promises to be as atmospheric and lyrical as his previous ensembles.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—No longer the new kid on the block with the magic fingers, the pianist **Cyrus Chestnut** (here with his trio through March 25) has, over the course of a decade, transformed himself into a vital element of the New York City jazz scene. The flying digits are still in grand shape, as is Chestnut's sense of pithy melody. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through March 25: In one of the more unexpected career resurgences in recent years, **Andy Bey** has risen from being a jazz footnote to a respected vocal stylist. Dining.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—March 23-24: **Wynard Harper,** a drummer whose presence guarantees a swinging bandstand, stops by with his trio, which features the singer **Whitney Marchelle** and the saxophonist **Patience Higgins,** on the 23rd, and the trombonist and Wynton Marsalis associate **Wycliff Gordon** on the 24th.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through March 25: The **Tommy Flanagan** trio. The world's most elegant jazz pianist settles in with his trio, featuring the bassist **Peter Washington** and the brilliant drummer **Albert Heath.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—With fifteen paintings by Vermeer (and a possible sixteenth, "Young Woman Seated at a Virginal," which has his luminously impersonal touch), five by the tragically short-lived Fabritius, who may have been his teacher, and ten by his great rival De Hooch, **"Vermeer and the Delft School"** offers an encyclopedic look at the milieu that formed the calmest genius of the seventeenth century. Maybe too encyclopedic: the Vermeers don't really appear until the sixth gallery, by which point the porcelains, maps, tapestries, and paintings by lesser artists have taken their toll. Viewers are also likely to bridle at the lack of Vermeer's favorite phenomenon—natural light. Otherwise, this is the Met at its best: a stately procession of masterpieces, accompanied by informative, sometimes tart commentary. Through May 27. ♦ **"Correggio and Parmigianino: Master Draftsmen of the Renaissance."** Through May 6. ♦ **"Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Chinese Painting."** Through Aug. 19. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Andreas Gursky's radiant, mural-size color photographs depict the patterned world (an unusually straight stretch of the Rhine, balconies stretching up and down a hotel atrium as far as the camera can see) and the lines people make in the landscape (a tiny cable car moving through the mist; a wide, regular stream of skiers traversing an otherwise empty winter scene). Mesmerizing treatments of commercial subjects, including a Prada shop and several stock exchanges, dominate his current work, though the newest piece, a diptych documenting the boards of directors of Germany's largest companies, is more commercial and less mesmerizing than the rest. Through May 15. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

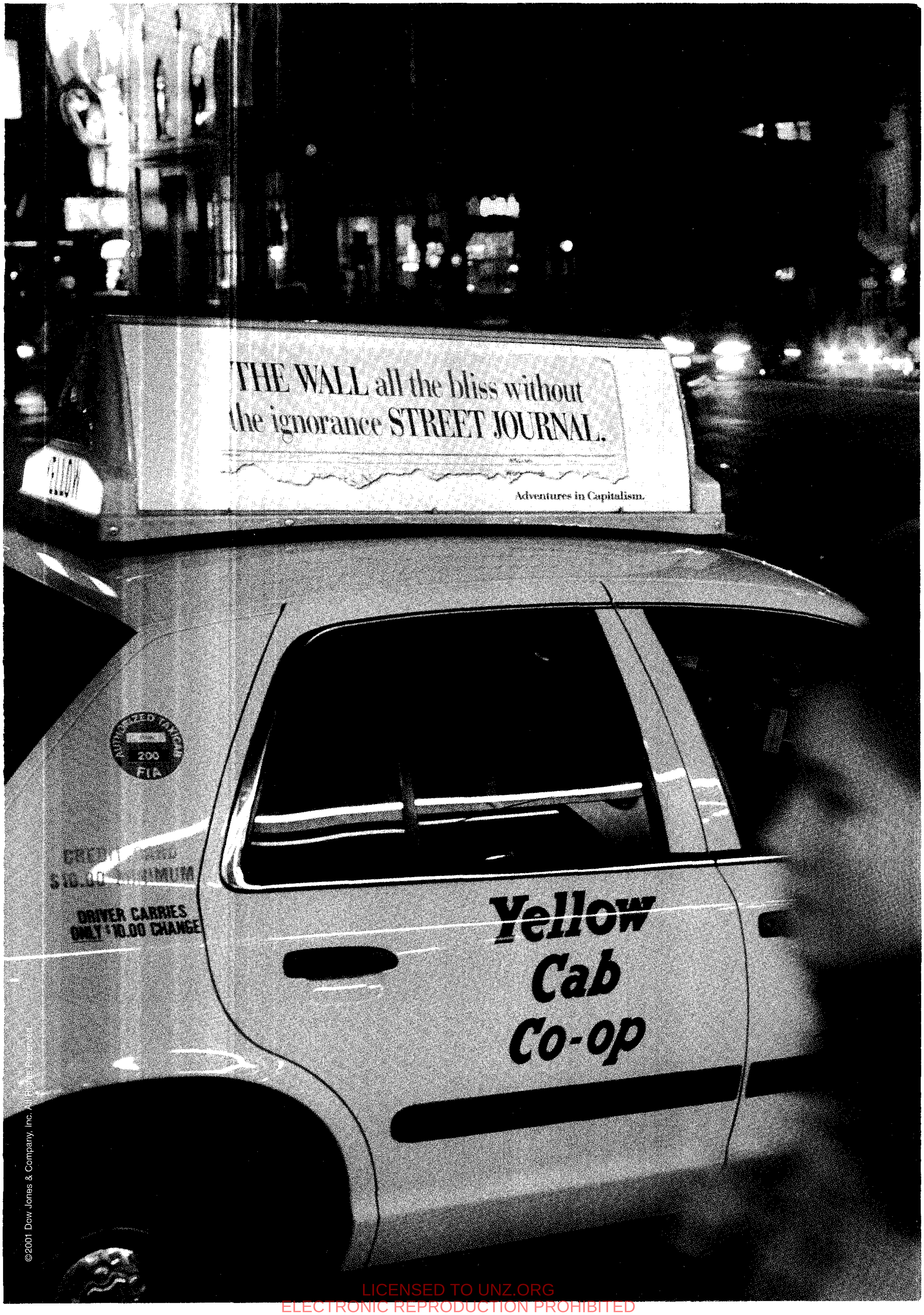
GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"The Global Guggenheim"** offers a selection of two hundred paintings and sculptures from the far-flung collection, normally housed in museum branches and partner institutions in Berlin, Bilbao, Venice, and St. Petersburg. The works themselves—a mix of familiar masterpieces and overseas guests—are generally spectacular, with particularly rich troves of Kandinsky, Brancusi, Mondrian, Picasso, and Rauschenberg. Through April 22. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The photographer Kenneth Josephson has turned exposure tricks and photographic illusions (boy holding photo of boy, nude holding mirror that reflects photographer) into a testament to the resources of the form. The full-scale retrospective makes a forceful case for the inventiveness of the artist, who comes across as a shutterbug version of Donald Barthelme. Through May 27. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—With two works apiece by ninety-four photographers, **"Committed to the Image"** is a free-for-all, highlighting the diversity of work by contemporary black photographers. As a community-outreach gesture, the show is hard to fault; aesthetically, though, it leaves one hungry for something more focussed and selective. Through April 29. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

CHINA INSTITUTE
125 E. 65th St. (744-8181)—**"Living Heritage: Vernacular Environment in China"** documents five regional variations on the classic house-with-courtyard dwelling. The imagery in the black-and-white photographs shifts from interiors (in one a gaggle of ducks cavorts in a pen slapped together from ornately carved nineteenth-century panels) to exteriors (don't miss the aerial view of circular dwellings—they look like flying saucers made of stone). Some pictures eschew architecture altogether; the image of a young woman in a suit and high heels, carrying an old-fashioned yoke from which dangle a pair of baskets, says more about the clash between tradition and progress than any wall text. Through June 10. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

DAHESH MUSEUM
601 Fifth Ave., at 49th St. (759-0606)—**"Gérôme and Goupil: Art and Enterprise"** examines the relationship between Jean-Léon Gérôme, the museum's academic painter of choice, and Adolphe Goupil, the dealer who commissioned engravings of Gérôme's work, making them both very wealthy. The galleries are closely hung with pairs of paintings and engravings, and, in one case, with nine-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teen distinctly different prints of the same painting. This is early gift-shop stuff—evidence of the dawn of mass-market reproductions, precursors to Monet's multiplying water lilies. It seems that even this relatively painstaking manner of reproduction dulled the effects of the works; the curators quote Zola, who noted that "there is barely a parlor in the provinces that does not have an engraving of 'Duel after the Ball' or 'Louis XIV and Molière.'" Through May 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

BRUCE NAUMAN
Evasiveness has always been Nauman's favorite tactic—some might say, his crutch. These disparate works, most of them from the eighties, include "Sex" pieces, in buzzing peep-store neon, and a group of mildly grotesque sculptures, made from taxidermic mannequins of game animals. They are grating but also opaque (neither lascivious nor puritanical, neither protest nor parody). Viewers are faced with a choice between Philistine irritation and avant-garde self-congratulation. Through April 14. (Zwirner and Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 517-8677.)

PAUL RESIKA / KATHERINE PORTER
The latest canvases by the veteran colorist Resika feature clusters of plump boats, bobbing atop their own red, yellow, green, and violet reflections. As always, his canvases are large, simple, and agreeably radiant, though their becalmed modernism drifts ever further toward formula. Upstairs, Porter's abstractions are as complicated as Resika's are cursory. Celestial arcs, circles, grids, and whorls mingle handsomely across sheets of coarse pebbled paper. The roughed-out geometry carries echoes of Dove and Hartley, but Porter's work is distinctively cacophonous. For the first time, she has begun to incorporate collaged elements, from tin-can lids to Polish banknotes. Through March 31. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606.)

TOM UTTECH
Uttech's meticulous, supernatural paintings of northern forests are full of spindly fir trees, ferny pools, lynxes, and bears. More than once, they cross the border into kitsch—one wishes the bears wouldn't stand up and cock their ears so amiably. Occasionally, however, his mix of Sierra Club sentiment and technical finesse catches fire. "Ganawaabanjige" (that's Ojibway for "They Watch Each Other") shows a vast coastal marsh, with wolves loitering in the foreground and thousands of birds wheeling chaotically above a spectral horizon. Through March 24. (Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122.)

Short List

JEAN DUBUFFET
Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623.
Through April 28.

JULIE HEFFERNAN
Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 980-2323. Through March 31. See also Downtown—Short List.

ROBERT KUSHNER
DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.
247-2111. Through March 31.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

DANICA PHELPS
Phelps's fastidiously pencilled journal-like work records income earned (in green watercolor), amounts charged on cards she doesn't pay off (gray), and cash spent on daily expenses (red). When she sells a day from her calendar or her record of an art trade, she traces the outgoing piece and keeps that second-generation copy as a placeholder. When she sells one of those tracings, she retraces it and adds a line noting the transaction. The pleasure is in the financial scheming as much as in the art objects. It's easy to imagine this constantly refreshed supply exhausting the demand, but maybe she can pay off the credit cards before her market crashes. Through March 31. (Lawrence/Feuer/LaMontaigne, 531 W. 26th St. 631-7700. See also Above and Beyond—Talks.)

ROB PRUITT
A decade ago the artist was famous as half of the team Pruitt & Early, who were praised for their take on beer-guzzling teen culture and later (in their final show) vilified for misappropriating black culture. Now the former bad boy turns comeback kid, with portraits of pandas made with glitter in lieu of paint. The entrance to the gallery is painted green and lined with potted bamboo plants; the over-all mood is a cross between Studio 54 and *National Geographic*. The show is glib but irresistible. Through March 24. (Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258.)

The violinist Kyung-Wha Chung performs at Avery Fisher Hall on March 25.

MATTHIAS CLAMER

Short List

GARY HUME
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.
Through April 21.

RAY JOHNSON
Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.
Through April 21.

MARIA MARSHALL
Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219.
Through April 14.

TERRY WINTERS
Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0300. Through April 28. See also Downtown—Short List.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

CAMERON HAYES
This latter-day Bosch takes on the horrors of modern life in labyrinthine paintings of cartoon crowds swarming over unlikely landscapes. His emblematic "Bonnie and Clyde During a Petrol Strike" shows a multistory slum traversed by plank bridges marked "Bus Lane"; the only possibility for improvement lies in an establishment called Loulou's Escapology School. The newsy "In 1977 Cameron Hooker Picked Up Hitchhiker, 19 Year Old Colleen Stan" features a clothesline draped with paper dolls decorated with porn ads, crime headlines, and, on the last one, the words "Hayes Paints the Smartest Picture Ever." Well, close—smart pictures and smarter self-promotion. Through April 21. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.)

Short List

JULIE HEFFERNAN
P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Through March 31. See also Uptown—Short List.

PAUL MC CARTHY
Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.
Through April 7.

TERRY WINTERS
Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753. Through April 28. See also Chelsea—Short List.

AUCTIONS & ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Asian Week is in full swing. March 21 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Nearly five hundred lots of Japanese art works, including a broad range of netsuke, inro, *sagemono*, porcelain, earthenware, prints, and screens; the highlight of the auction is "Fishermen," a delicately colored pair of screens by the eighteenth-century artist Goshun. ♦ March 21 at approximately 3:30: The afternoon ends with a smaller sale of Korean art works. ♦ March 22 at 10:15 A.M.: Chinese ceramics, art works, and furniture. The offerings range from an exceptionally rare "peach bloom" glazed waterpot from the Kangxi period (estimated to sell at more than three hundred thousand dollars) to a charming little white jade snuff bottle (ca. 1800) in the form of a pig. ♦ March 23 at 10:15 A.M.: More than a hundred and sixty lots of prints, posters, drawings, books, manuscripts, photographs, and letters by or associated with Toulouse-Lautrec. All of his best-known images are represented, including "Moulin Rouge—La Goulue," "Jane Avril," and "Eldorado—Aristide Bruant." ♦ March 24 at 10 A.M. and 2: Fine wine. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
March 21 at 10 A.M.: Sculpture, bronzes, paintings, and manuscripts from India, the Himalayas, and Southeast Asia; the standout of the sale is a sensuous Indian buff-sandstone frieze of Vishnu, Lakshmi, Shiva, and Parvati, from the tenth century. ♦ March 22 at 10 A.M. and 2: A morning session devoted exclusively to Japanese prints, followed by a sale of Japanese ceramics, paintings, and other art works in the afternoon. Two of the more notable items include Hiroshige's iconic "Ohashi, Sudden Shower at Atake" and a massive stoneware jar from the Heian period. ♦ March 22 at 5: The day ends with a sale of Korean art works; the selection includes a Buddhist scroll painting of an arhat by Kim Eui-in, dated 1236. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

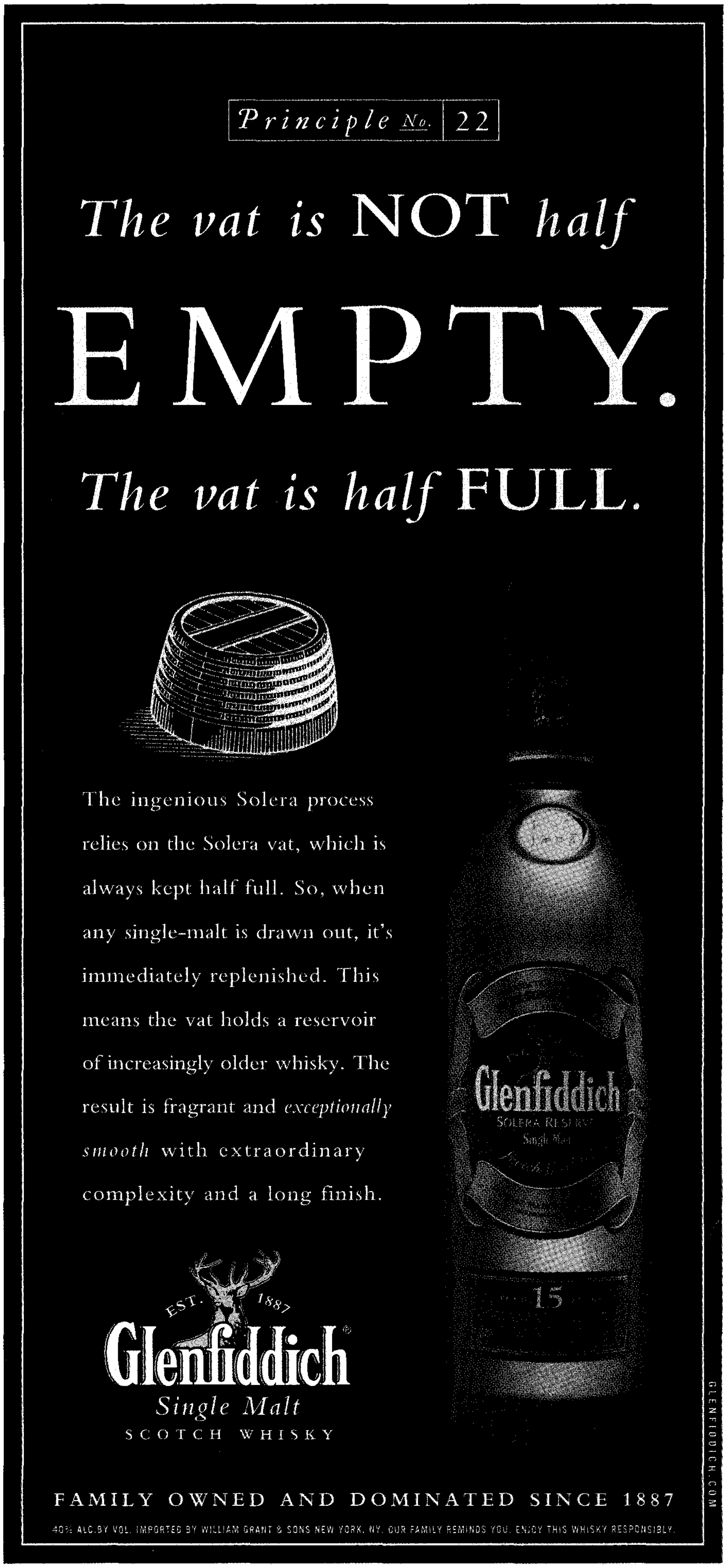
INTERNATIONAL ASIAN ART FAIR
The sixth annual exhibition of leading dealers, featuring a range of furniture, sculpture, bronzes, jewelry, and more. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. 642-8572. March 23-28.)

ARTS OF PACIFIC ASIA SHOW
A wide selection of art works, furniture, and decorative objects from China, Japan, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent; textiles will be a special feature of the show. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave. at 25th St. 532-1516. March 23-25.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI / JEFF WALL
This double show offers a rare opportunity to see the work of two artists who have been expanding the role of photography in contemporary art since the late seventies. Boltanksi's installation, "Reflexion," spotlights photographs of unidentified subjects, printed on cloth, while a selection of Wall's new light-box-mounted images includes some of the signature surreal staged work that inspired a genre. Opens March 21. (Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. See also Art—Galleries—Uptown.)

RAY K. METZKER
Metzker, best known for his shadowy images of the urban condition and his multiple-exposure collages, offers delicate square black-and-white prints, many of which fall between traditional landscape and botanical styles. The photographs, made in places like Utah (the "Darkness Reigns" series), Tuscany ("Feste di Foglie"), and Provence ("Sojourn"), take advantage of nature's overlap-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ping scrims of leaves and land to set up rich networks of labyrinthine passages for the eye to navigate. Through March 31. (Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.)

JOHN MONTEITH
Monteith composes these collages of yearbook photos in Warhol-style grids and crossword-puzzle-like intersecting lines. Some pieces repeat the same image at different densities, others alter what seem to be entire graduating classes with Cheshire-cat grins and blank, circular eyes. Their cumulative effect is to suggest that identity is not recorded but reduced by vernacular portraiture. Still, after studying hundreds of faces, it's hard not to find several that look like someone you know. Through March 31. (Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819.)

CHARLIE WHITE
To begin "Understanding Joshua," White first constructed him: a slightly smaller-than-human-size figure whose strange features mingle the wrinkled, empathy-eliciting physiognomies of E.T. and Ron Mueck's "Dead Dad," of "Sensation" fame. Joshua's high, furrowed brow; wide eyes and mouth; and slack, hairy skin are painfully, pointedly vulnerable. White's staged pictures of him—ever uncomfortable and yearning—at a cocktail party, in a locker-room shower, and "At Her Place" will make viewers feel his pain. Through April 7. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
While I.C.P.'s Midtown space is closed for installation, a Carrie Mae Weems show continues Uptown. **"The Hampton Project"** is really two exhibits, a roomful of Frances Benjamin Johnston's sober photographs of students at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, circa 1900, and Weems's takes on those images, accompanied by a voice-over. Through April 1. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 93rd St. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

RICHARD BARNES
Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 627-0974.
Through April 7.

OLIVER BOBERG
Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752.
Through April 28.

KATE BREAKEY
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 627-2410.
Through April 21.

WARD DAVENNY
Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669.
Through March 31.

WILLIAM EGGLESTON
Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.
Through April 14.

SIMEN JOHAN
Gallery 24, 552 W. 24th St. 414-0370.
Through April 14.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON
Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.
Through March 31.

"NIGHT LIFE"
Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.
Through April 15.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and the China Institute.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
The final two performances of **"La Bohème,"** with Elena Evseeva, Ainhoa Arteta, Frank Lopardo, Gerald Finley, Earle Patriarco, and Richard Bernstein; Steven Crawford conducts. (March 21 at 8 and March 24 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Il Trovatore,"** with Michele Crider, Irina Mishura, Richard Margison, Valery Alexeev, and Dimitri Kavrakos; Carlo Rizzi. (March 22 at 8 and March 26 at 8.) ♦ **"The Gambler,"** the Met's first-ever presentation of a Prokofiev opera, in a new production by Temur Chkheidze, with sets by George Tsypin. The scenario is based on Dostoyevsky's story about a group of desperate Russians who lose their hearts and wallets at a German spa; though the work was once dismissed as a curiosity, recent productions have shown it to be a compelling ensemble piece in a bracing modernist style. With Olga Guryakova, Olga Savova, Elena Obraztsova, Vladimir Galouzine, Nikolai Gassiev, John Fanning, and Sergei Alexashkin; Valery Gergiev. (March 23 at 8 and March 27 at 8.) ♦ Elijah Moshinsky's new production of Verdi's **"Nabucco,"** a great, rough-hewn jewel of an opera, is a triumph by almost any measure. Maria Guleghina has perfected the part of Abigaille, even if she occasionally hams it up onstage; Samuel Ramey, in the role of the priest Zaccaria, matches Guleghina in musical authority and strong characterization. The vocally impressive performances of Juan Pons (in the title role) and Francisco Casanova (as Ismaele) may be a bit lacking in dramatic force, but the Met chorus, singing "Va, pensiero," compresses itself into the single character—the Jewish people—that Verdi demands. John Napier's imposing sets effectively fill the entire stage without Zeffirelli-style clutter, and James Levine delivers a flawlessly paced account of the score. (March 24 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

"Breaker" (see Above and Beyond).

KIM DEMARCO

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Mark Lamos's new production of Handel's first dramatic work in English, **"Acis and Galatea,"** which has never before been staged in New York. With Christine Brandes, William Burden, John Tessier, and Dean Elzinga; Jane Glover. (March 21 at 7:30 and March 27 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Rigoletto,"** with Christina Bouras, Kirstin Chávez, Mark Delavan, Raul Hernandez, and Peter Volpe; Guido Johannes Rumstadt. (March 23 at 8.) ♦ A new production of **"La Bohème,"** directed by James Robinson and with sets by Allen Moyer. With Maria Kanyova, Nicole Heaston, Rolando Villazon, Alfredo Daza, George Cordes, and Mel Ulrich; George Manahan conducts. (March 24 at 1:30.) ♦ Mark Lamos's production of **"Tosca,"** set in Fascist Italy in the nineteen-thirties, continues its run. With Amy Johnson, Alfredo Portilla, and Jeffrey Kneebone; Richard Buckley. (March 24 at 8.) ♦ Harold Prince's production of **"Don Giovanni"** returns to the repertory, with Sally Wolf, Oksana Krovytska, Mariateresa Magisano, David Pittsinger (in the title role), Matthew Polenzani, Kevin Langan, Valerian Ruminski, and John Marcus Bindel; Steuart Bedford. (March 25 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Christoph Eschenbach—a leading contender for the orchestra's music directorship until he was bested by Lorin Maazel—leads a program firmly in the Franco-Russian orbit: Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring," Rachmaninoff's indestructible Third Piano Concerto (with the photogenic soloist Tzimon Barto, in his Philharmonic début), and "Métaboles," by Henri Dutilleux. Even more than Pierre Boulez, Dutilleux is the contemporary composer whose art, like that of Corot and Proust, can perform the classically French feat of crystallizing the sensuality of the passing moment within a complex evocation of time. (March 22-24 at 8 and March 27 at 7:30.) ♦ In a tighter, "rush-hour" concert, Barto, Eschenbach, and the orchestra will present the Rachmaninoff concerto only. (March 21 at 6:45.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500.)

PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Michael Hersch, at twenty-nine, may be the most talked-about young composer in America; his work "Ashes of Memory," which had a successful première with the Pittsburgh Symphony last season, leads off the first of two Carnegie Hall concerts, which also includes Sibelius's Symphony No. 2 and the Schumann Piano Concerto (with Leif Ove Andsnes). (March 21 at 8.) ♦ The orchestra's music director, Mariss Jansons, returns for a concert of music by Gabrieli, Bartók ("Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta"), Strauss, Stravinsky, and Ravel (the Suite No. 2 from "Daphnis et Chloé"). (247-7800. March 22 at 8.)

LENTEN CHANTS FROM THE ISLAND OF HVAR
The male choir of the Church of St. Stephen on Hvar, an island off Croatia's Dalmatian coast, sings an ancient form of Christian hymnody which combines the purity of Gregorian chant with rich choruses in spicy Mediterranean harmony. At the Croatian Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, the choir will reënact, in compact form, the ritual of "Following the Cross," a grand processional that wends its way through the island's villages. (502 W. 41st St. 545-7536. March 25 at 1.)

CHOIR OF ST. THOMAS CHURCH
The Anglican choir of men and boys offers a Lenten Evensong service of unusual modern works: Stravinsky's iconic "Ave Maria" and the knotty, athletic St. John's College Cambridge "Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis," by Michael Tippett. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. March 25 at 4.)

PETER SERKIN AND THE LONDON SINFONIETTA
Maurizio Pollini's two-year series of "Perspectives" concerts, just completed last week, explored the pianist's interests in works of Western music written across the span of two millennia; Carnegie Hall's new series, with the pianist Serkin, will devote the same energetic scrutiny to music from the last seventy-five years. Serkin's playing—a hybrid of the Germanic precision he inherited from his father and a radical expressive streak befitting a child of the nineteen-sixties—has been an ideal vehicle for a small group of highly intellectual composers he has championed for many years. In this, the first of four concerts, Serkin, the London Sinfonietta (Britain's leading new-music group), and Serkin's longtime collaborator, the composer-

conductor Oliver Knussen, will present Toru Takemitsu's "Green," the New York premières of Peter Lieberson's "Red Garuda" and Charles Wuorinen's "Symphony Seven," and two late works by Stravinsky, the mysterious "Variations (Aldous Huxley in Memoriam)" and "The Flood," an exceedingly strange treatment of the story of Noah and the ark. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 26 at 8.)

VOX VOCAL ENSEMBLE
The chorus, directed by George Steel, completes its survey of the music of the English Renaissance master Robert Parsons with a concert of his Latin works, including the translucent "Ave Maria." (Miller Theatre, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 27 at 8.)

RECITALS

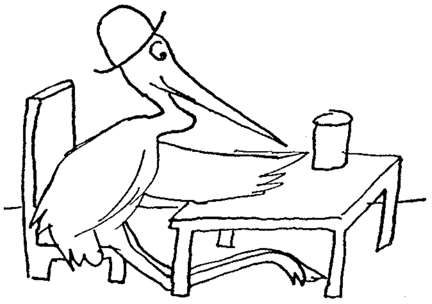
SONGBOOK FOR A NEW CENTURY
The New York Festival of Song has commissioned twenty Americans to write songs on texts that look to the future. The roster of composers includes William Bolcom, Milton Babbitt, Eve Beglarian, John Zorn, and David Ludwig; the featured performers include the mezzo-soprano Theodora Hanslowe, the baritone Mel Ulrich, and the pianist Michael Barrett. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. March 22 at 8.)

SCOTT JOHNSON / JULIA WOLFE
On the Performing Garage's "American Originals" series, Johnson, one of the few American composers to effectively integrate the influence of rock into strong classical structures, will present the première of his work "Maybe You" with his electric ensemble; the concert also includes three pieces by another downtown star, Julia Wolfe, performed by the Ethel String Quartet and the Lionheart vocal ensemble. (33 Wooster St. 966-3651. March 22 at 8 and March 24 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
March 22-23 at 7:30: Ravel's "Alborada del Gracioso" (played by Cecile Licad), along with music by Debussy, Kodaly, and Mendelssohn (the Trio in D Minor, with the violinist Carmit Zori and the cellist Melissa Meell). ♦ March 24 at 7:30 and March 25 at 4: The baritone Sanford Sylvan, the pianist Cynthia Raim, and others gather for music by Bach (the "Italian Concerto"), Barber ("Dover Beach"), Hindemith, and Brahms. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

EMANUEL AX AND EVELYN GLENNIE
Ax is a pianist who has always possessed a generosity of spirit to go along with his prodigious technique and inquisitive mind. In the first of two programs entitled "The Art of the Piano (and Percussion)," he teams up with the percussion superstar Evelyn Glennie and the toy-piano virtuoso Margaret Leng Tan for a program featuring premières of pieces by Harrison Birtwistle, Elena Kats-Chernin, Keiko Abe, and Nebojsa Jovan Zivkovic, along with Debussy's "Images" (Book I). (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. March 25 at 2.)

KYUNG-WHA CHUNG
This splendid, seasoned violinist, who is not heard that often hereabouts, offers a recital of Stravinsky, Bach, Prokofiev (the incendiary First Sonata), and Rachmaninoff, with the pianist Itamar Golan. Chung has been in the business for more than thirty years, and her style—incisively rhythmic, rhapsodically elegant, and touched with melancholy—remains urgent and affecting. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. March 25 at 3.)



AN DIE MUSIK
The ensemble presents a program of Beethoven, Britten, and Tchaikovsky (the luxuriant string sextet, "Souvenir de Florence"). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. March 25 at 4.)

MET CHAMBER ENSEMBLE
The conductor James Levine leads the ensemble in music by Schoenberg (the Chamber Symphony, Op. 9), Beethoven, Bach, and, in case you haven't heard enough Ligeti this season, the composer's "Ramifications," for twelve solo strings. (247-7800. March 25 at 5.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Edgar Meyer, the double-bassist and rangy composer, is bent on creating a new chamber repertory for his instrument; his newest work is a trio that he premières with the clarinettist David Shifrin and the cellist Gary Hoffman. In addition, Cho-Liang Lin, with the pianist André-Michel Schub, will offer the Violin Sonata No. 2 by Brahms, and the whole crew joins together (with the violist Paul Neubauer) for Schubert's "Trout" Quintet. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788. March 25 at 5 and March 27 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"BREAKER"
The trapeze artist Chelsea Bacon once heard a strange tale about a band of sea creatures which kidnaps the residents of a seaside village and drags them into the ocean. She was intrigued, but she was unable to track down the source of the story, so she's written her own version, which she describes as an aerial fairy tale. In this hour-long musical, the five cast members spend as much time above the stage as on it. "I'm interested in the emotional honesty that can be heightened by using an apparatus," the former circus performer explains, referring to, in this case, the trapeze, rope, window frame, rocking chair, and cargo net that she's hung in the air. "The only place I feel truly comfortable," she adds, "is off the ground." (Dixon Place at Vineyard 26, at 309 E. 26th St. 532-1546. March 23 at 8 and March 24 at 3 and 8.)

SMALL PRESS BOOK FAIR
More than two hundred independent publishers bring their tomes to town. Highlights are as follows. March 24 at 2: A celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Pushcart Prize, with Bill Henderson, the prize's founder. March 24 at 3:30: A panel discussion about the First Amendment, with the attorney Michael Bamberger; David Horowitz, the executive director of the Media Coalition; Chris Finan, the president of the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression; and Sander Hicks, a senior editor at Softskull Press. March 25 at 2:30: A reading of works by Edith Wharton, by the actress Penny White. (Small Press Center, 20 W. 44th St. 764-7021. March 24 from 10 to 6 and March 25 from 11 to 5.)

READINGS
March 21 at 8: By Matthew Klam, from his fiction, and by Jessica Greenbaum, from her poetry. A part of the *New Yorker* Out Loud series. The magazine's fiction and literary editor, Bill Buford, and its poetry editor, Alice Quinn, will introduce the readers. (BAM Café, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4139.) ♦ March 27 at 4: By the short-story writer Junot Diaz, from his work. (Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, 401 Hammer Building, 701 W. 168th St. For more information, call 305-6787.)

TALKS
March 22 at 6:30: The art historian Dirk Snauwaert discusses the Belgian artist Panamarenko's experimental flying machines, which are on exhibit at the Dia Center for the Arts. (548 W. 22nd St. 989-5566.) ♦ March 24 at 2: The artist Danica Phelps talks about her particularly mercantile style (see Art—Galleries—Chelsea). (Lawrence/Feuer/LaMontaigne, 531 W. 26th St. 631-7700.)

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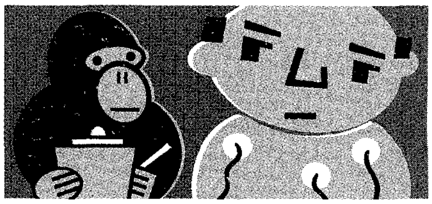
BOOK CURRENTS

Going Ape

"I joined the baboon troop during my twenty-first year," writes Robert M. Sapolsky, the eminent Stanford neuroscientist, in his just-published **A PRIMATE'S MEMOIR** (Scribner). Sapolsky's wording reminds us of what makes fundamentalists so nervous about evolution: that humans clearly belong to the animal kingdom. Sapolsky reinforces this simple truth by giving his Serengeti baboon pals Biblical names (Solomon, for example, is an alpha male who loafs all day like a pasha), carrying a picture of the misfit Benjamin, and trying to show that baboons, like people, get totally stressed out. The fact that Sapolsky spends much of his time blowgunning anesthetic darts into the resplendent backsides of his simian compatriots doesn't diminish the bond between man and ape.



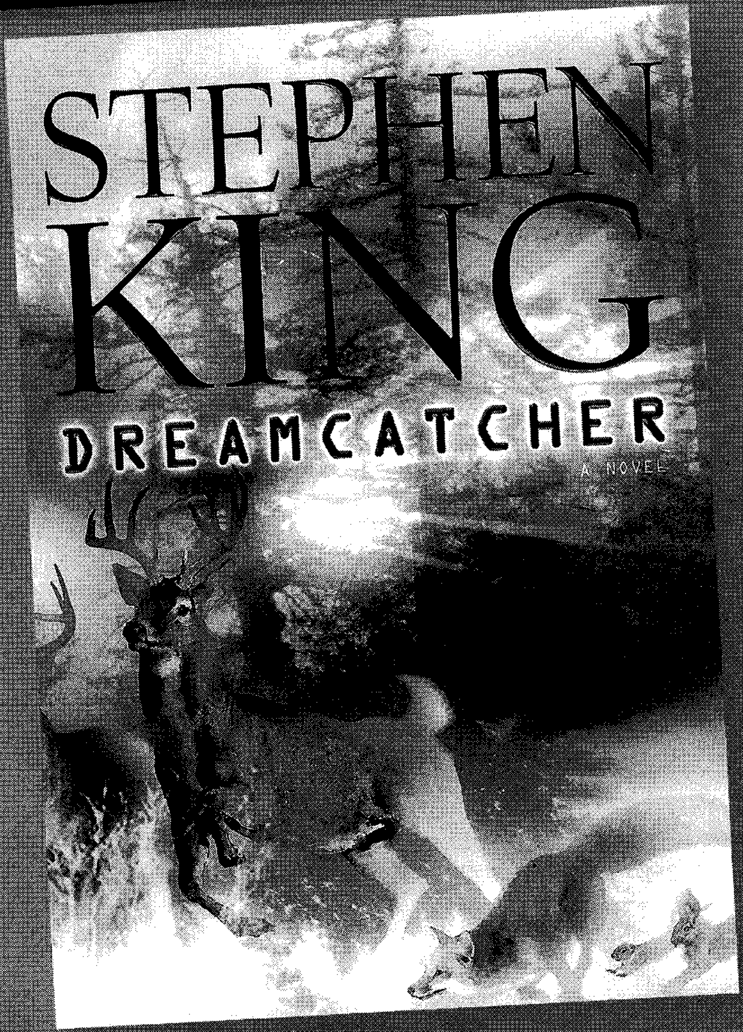
Similarly, the Dutch primatologist Frans de Waal argues in **THE APE AND THE SUSHI MASTER** (Basic) that anthropomorphism—the once frowned-upon assumption of shared characteristics between humans and animals—"is not only inevitable, it is a powerful tool." De Waal's investigation of "culture" in ape societies includes a fascinating look at our cousin the bonobo, an amazingly mellow primate whose sex life makes the Kama Sutra look, well, tame.

Still, it's chimps that hold our imagination, as evidenced by two recently reprinted classics: Jane Goodall's landmark **IN THE SHADOW OF MAN** (Houghton Mifflin) and the curious **VISIONS OF CALIBAN** (Georgia), by Goodall and Dale Peterson. In the latter, the authors compare the cute yet conniving chimpanzee to Shakespeare's famous man-beast, noting that these creatures illustrate the fact that we humans "endure on an island-planet troubled, pestered, shadowed by a bestial double."

—*Mark Rozzo*

STEPHEN SAVAGE

BOOKMARKED



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"Jonesy almost shot the guy when he came out of the woods. How close? Another pound on the Garand's trigger, maybe just a half. Later, hyped on the clarity that sometimes comes to the horrified mind, he wished he had shot before he saw the orange cap and the orange flagman's vest. Killing Richard McCarthy couldn't have hurt, and it might have helped. Killing McCarthy might have saved them all."

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MOVIES OPENING

THE BROTHERS
A drama about the lives and loves of four black men. With D. L. Hughley, Morris Chestnut, Bill Bellamy, and Shemar Moore. Directed by Gary Hardwick. Opening March 23.

HEARTBREAKERS
Max (Sigourney Weaver) and Page (Jennifer Love Hewitt) are a mother-and-daughter con team; Max marries rich men, Page seduces them, and together they rake in the alimony. Directed by David Mirkin. Opening March 23.

SAY IT ISN'T SO
Chris Klein plays a bachelor who meets his dream girl (Heather Graham), only to find out that she may be his sister, in this comedy directed by James B. Rogers. Opening March 23.

TOO MUCH SLEEP
A comedy about a security guard (Marc Palmieri) who uncovers an oddball criminal underworld in his suburban town. Written and directed by David Maquiling. Opening March 23. (State.)

FILM NOTES

BEFORE NIGHT FALLS
At its best, Julian Schnabel's second film is a memoir of easy and raffish good times—the endless summer days at the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. Schnabel adapted an autobiographical memoir by the poet and novelist Reinaldo Arenas (Javier Bardem), a homosexual who was initially a participant in the revolution, then a victim of it, and was finally allowed to leave Cuba in 1980. Arenas settled in New York, wrote a great deal, and, suffering from AIDS, committed suicide here in 1990. Schnabel doesn't tell this story coherently: characters appear or disappear without explanation, and we don't always know where we are. The method is closer to collage than to Hollywood script construction, but Schnabel works sensually, and that makes up for a lot. Bardem, who has the face of a shy, smiling bull—a prominent nose, handsome eyes—loosens up his shoulders and elbows and gives a performance of great charm.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/8/01.) (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

A DAY IN THE COUNTRY
Jean Renoir's thirty-seven-minute film from a Guy de Maupassant story is one of the two or three greatest short-story films ever made—a lyric tragedy that ranks with his finest work. Visually, it recaptures the Impressionist period; in tone, it accomplishes a transformation from light nostalgic comedy to despair. In the late eighteen-hundreds a merchant (Gabriello) takes his family for an outing on the banks of the Marne; there, his wife (Jeanne Marken) and his innocent young daughter (Sylvia Bataille) are seduced—the one delightedly, the other tremblingly, like a captured bird. Released in 1937. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 26.)

THE DISH
A pleasant, even charming, movie, but so determinedly small-scale and personal that it flirts with innocuousness. In a remote, unknown Australian town, a group of local technicians, together with an American from NASA, man a giant telescope tracking the moon shot in 1969. All sorts of embarrassing snafus occur just as the whole world is watching, and the various ambitions and jealousies of the men play into the mess. There's a touching moment when the entire town gathers around the TV to watch Neil Armstrong's first step, and they all realize that he and they have become part of history. Rob Sitch directed.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

ENEMY AT THE GATES
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Coronet Cinemas, East 85th Street, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

"LOVE, LOVE, AMORE AND SPAGHETTI"
LORENZO
DIR: RAF. LANCELOTTO
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15 MINUTES
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

THE GLEANERS AND I
The French filmmaker Agnès Varda, digital camera in hand, roams around her country recording the movements of gleaners. Traditionally, as in the archetypal Millet painting, gleaners were women who gathered the remains of the harvest; their modern counterparts are mostly scavengers, searching in dumpsters and other likely places. The French, of course, give the practice a wonderfully perverse twist—many gleaners do so by choice, disdainful of wastefulness and rampant consumerism. Varda's photographic eye is much in evidence, and her narration is both shrewd and whimsical. When she leaves a camera on accidentally, she uses the unintended footage to create a "dance of the lens cap," a filmic gleaning that acts as a perfect grace note. In French.—*Michael Agger* (Film Forum.)

HANNIBAL
Ten years after "The Silence of the Lambs," Hannibal Lecter returns to the table. He is played, once again, by Anthony Hopkins, who seems both more placid and more particular in his cravings. Lecter is in Florence, where he is suspected by a local detective (Giancarlo Giannini, the best and most rumpled thing in the movie). Also on the trail is Clarice Starling (Julianne Moore), who is now an outcast within the F.B.I. Huntress and prey finally meet; indeed, we are given to understand that they can barely keep away from each other. The screenwriters, David Mamet and Steven Zaillian, do a good job of sifting the dross from Thomas Harris's novel, and the director, Ridley Scott, gets elegant value from what remains. The locations are lush, the reworked ending could not be neater, and the special effects were apparently devised by an abattoir. There's just one problem, and it's insurmountable: this is not a scary movie.—*Anthony Lane* (2/12/01) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, Union Square, and Waverly.)

IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE
The latest film from the talented young Hong Kong writer-director Wong Kar Wai makes us pant for adultery. In the early sixties, in a community of Shanghai refugees living in Hong Kong, Mrs. Chan (Maggie Cheung) and Mr. Chow (Tony Leung) are next-door neighbors in a friendly apartment building. The perfectly dressed and coiffed couple meet, talk, and realize that their frequently travelling spouses are off having an affair with each other. What to do? The movie is all about sensual anticipation. Nat King Cole croons on the soundtrack, and the camera caresses the rain on the streets and the texture of a stone wall in the semi-darkness. So skillfully does the director bring us to a state of breathless expectation that when he refuses to deliver the goods he almost seems to have invented a new form of perversion. In Cantonese and French.—*D.D.* (2/5/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE LADYKILLERS
The actors in this sinister 1965 black comedy seem to be having a boisterous good time getting themselves knocked off. Alec Guinness, almost done in by great hideous teeth—so enormous they give him master-criminal status—is the leader of a horrendous gang that includes Peter Sellers as Harry, the plump, awkward teddy boy. Katie Johnson is the cheerful old lady who upsets their fiendish plans simply by living in a world of her own. As her victims are, in some ways, even less real than she, the disasters that befall them are extravagantly funny. Directed by Alexander Mackendrick.—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 27.)

LAST RESORT
A beautifully filmed, moody story about a young Russian mother (Dina Korzun) and son who arrive for a new life in London only to be shunted into a holding area in a seaside town. In this limbo, she is befriended by an Englishman (Paddy Considine), and they develop a tenuous affection for each other. The writer/director Pawel Pawlikowski vividly captures the makeshift society of asylum seekers, but his main achievement is the movie's emotional calculus—the drama builds from the principles of what we already know, and leads to an intensely bittersweet conclusion.—*M.A.* (Film Forum.)

MEMENTO
For those who enjoyed getting their heads around "Back to the Future," here is a movie that takes off in the opposite direction. Guy Pearce plays Leonard, a former insurance investigator who has mislaid his short-term memory; leave the room and come back ten minutes later, and he won't remember you. To help his case, and to solve the apparent murder of his wife, Leonard tattoos himself with memoranda and drives around the lowlier districts of L.A. County. At the same time, he has a couple of acquaintances (Carrie-Anne Moss and Joe Pantoliano) who seem eager both to support Leonard and to use his condition for their own unscrupulous ends. There is a fine, despairing comedy to these events—not just in our fidgety hero, but in the constant thwarting of our need to know. After all, the solution to a whodunit is never easy when you can't even be certain what got done. The young British writer and director Christopher Nolan, who has every intention of putting us through the mill, doubles his fun by running the whole story backward. Damn him.—*A.L.* (3/19/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.)

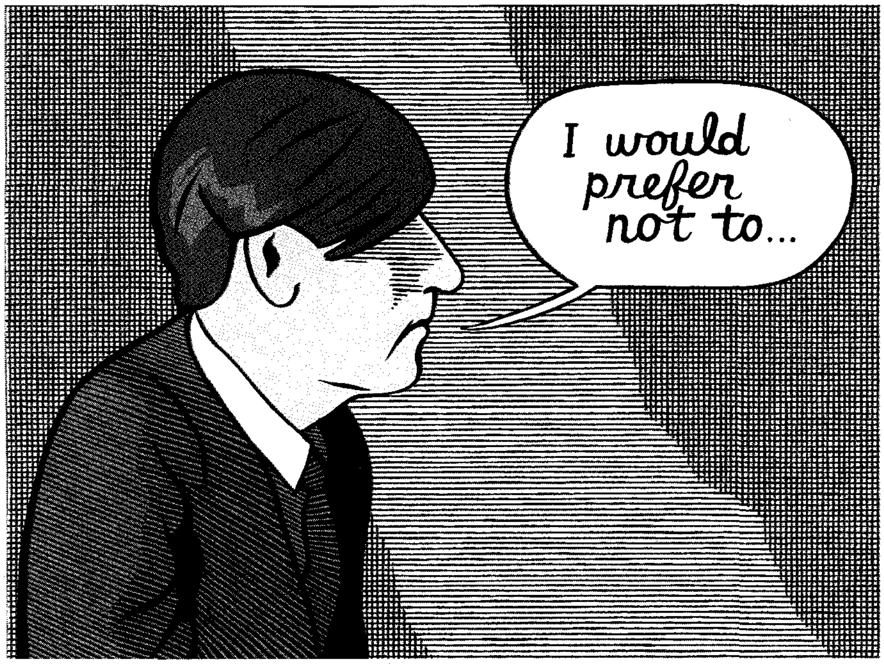
THE MEXICAN
A shaggy-taco story—one of those south-of-the-border romps in which many people die in odd ways and the Mexicans are either gap-toothed cretins or unspeakably dignified grandees. Brad Pitt is Jerry, a small-time loser sent to Mexico by Los Angeles gangsters to retrieve a fabled handmade pistol; Julia Roberts is his girlfriend, Sam, who loves Jerry but is disgusted with him and flounces off to Las Vegas, where she's kidnapped by a sensitive gay hit man (James Gandolfini). Pitt and Roberts appear together only at the beginning and end of the movie and spend all their time engaging in the kind of noisy, shin-kicking squabble which must be fun to perform but does nothing for the audience. Roberts works much better in her heart-to-heart chats with Gandolfini about life, love, and sex. The writer, J. H. Wyman, and the director, Gore Verbinski, may have been trying for the multilevel playfulness of "Pulp Fiction," but the production veers haplessly between facetiousness and solemnity.—*D.D.* (3/12/01) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

POLLOCK
A dogged march through the life and work of Jackson Pollock, starting in the early nineteen-forties, when Lee Krasner (Marcia Gay Harden) first approached him in Greenwich Village, continuing through their marriage and other tempests, and ending gloomily in a car wreck in 1956. The film was

directed by Ed Harris, who also plays the artist. His face doesn't much resemble that of Pollock, who looked more like the Wallace Shawn of the West, but Harris has mastered the hunched amble and the glaring gaze. His best scenes are not the boozy rants but the quiet times with a cigarette and a brush—or, latterly, a dripping stick. Pollock's drinking was an interruption of his art, not a spur to it, and the film can do little to connect the two; we are left with a sombre study of discontent, enlivened by the appearance of Jennifer Connelly as the painter's final girlfriend. What she saw in him, by that stage, is anybody's guess. With Val Kilmer pretending to be Willem de Kooning.—*A.L.* (3/5/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

SERIES 7

Daniel Minahan's parody of reality television shows is harsh and strident, but it's not without some very funny moments. Shot on video, it presents itself without explanation, encouraging you to feel as though you had stepped into the near future and turned on your TV. The show is called "Series 7" and the contestants, à la "The Running Man," track and kill each other on camera. What's worse (or better) is that the current champion happens to be a pregnant mother (Brooke Smith), and one of the other contestants is her former high-school flame. Minahan takes the manipulative, stagy devices of tabloid TV—along with elements of "The Real World"—and uses them to amplify the drama of his absurd premise. The film eventually trips over its own feet: it wants to play a joke on the audience ("Why are you laughing?") but also to be just a joke ("Please laugh").—*M.A.* (Empire 25 and Village East Cinemas.)


I would prefer not to...

Crispin Glover as the title character of "Bartleby," a clever update of Herman Melville's short story and the opening film of the "New Directors/New Films" festival.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

THE TASTE OF OTHERS

In the provincial city of Rouen, a married factory owner named Castella (Jean-Pierre Bacri) falls in love with a local actress after seeing her perform in a production of Racine's "Bérénice." The actress, Clara (Anne Alvaro), a refined, lonely woman, hangs out with the other actors and a few local artists—a closed bohemian circle—and is appalled by her wealthy admirer, who tells blundering, unfunny jokes. This pleasingly observant and intelligent movie was written by Bacri and his partner, Agnès Jaoui, who directed the movie (plainly but effectively) and also appears in it as a free-living bar girl. Bacri and Jaoui are fascinated by manners in both the smaller and the larger sense: What holds a group of people together? What relationships make a happy life possible? The movie suggests that small groups united by taste may have their comforts, but without a sudden alteration of taste—sometimes called love—no true movement in life is possible. In French.—*D.D.* (3/12/01) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

VAGABOND

Agnès Varda wrote and directed this scrupulously hardheaded 1985 film about an eighteen-year-old girl on the road, a deliberately homeless drifter who lives on handouts, thefts, a little prostitution, and the occasional odd job. Varda presents the movie as a documentary investigating how this happened; the characters are the sullen, suspicious, vacant-eyed young girl (played immaculately by Sandrine Bonnaire) and the witnesses to her last weeks. In French.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; March 24-25.)

WALLACE AND GROMIT

It's no wonder that Alec Guinness was devoted to Nick Park's signature creations: Wallace, the fubsy bachelor inventor, and Gromit, his long-suffering canine companion. Although Wallace and Gromit are plasticine figures, moved by hand, their daft, deft cartoon adventures, "A Grand Day Out," "The Wrong Trousers," and "A Close Shave," lay claim to the wit and the humanity of classic Guinness comedies (especially, perhaps, "The Man in the White Suit") while paying homage to fantasy and suspense films from "Destination Moon" to "Topkapi." Park's tight plotting, gimcrack machinery, and droll characterizations give off a charm both delicate and pointed. His conceptual masterstroke was making Gromit a silent hero, in contrast to the cheese-obsessed and exclamatory Wallace. Audiences young and old are drawn into the dog's big-eyed expressions of wariness, determination, and ever-so-fleeting contentment.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Television & Radio; March 21-25.)

THE WIDOW OF SAINT-PIERRE

In the French colony of Saint-Pierre (an island near Newfoundland) during the middle of the nineteenth century, a captain of the guard (Daniel Auteuil) and his high-minded wife (Juliette Binoche) adopt as their protégé a man who has committed a meaningless murder (Emir Kusturica). The murderer is a sweetheart—a gentle and educable fellow. As the community awaits the arrival of a guillotine and an executioner, the captain and his wife refuse to bow to the logic of capital punishment or to administrative bloody-mindedness. The actors carry themselves with fierce reserve, as if they were doing something very serious, but Patrice Leconte's

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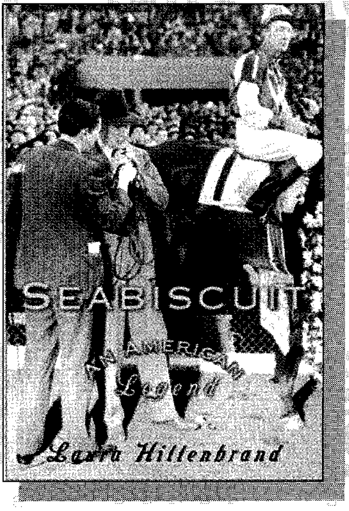

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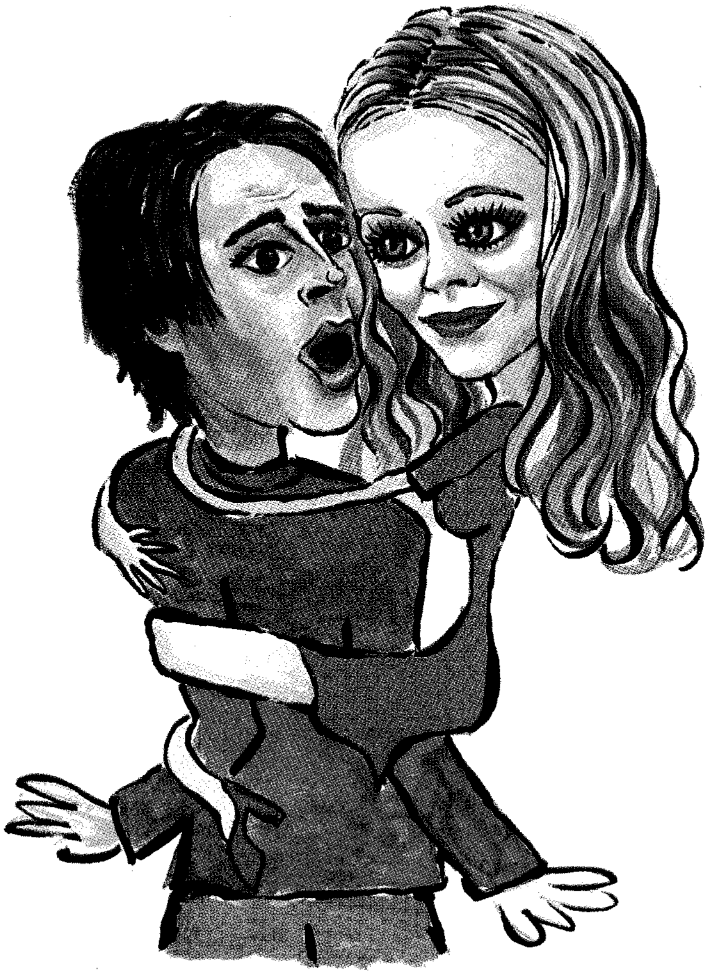
Opening March 23, Chris Klein and Heather Graham in "Say It Isn't So."

ROBERT MELEE

film, for all its stern moral conviction, manages to duck the only question worth asking: would a less sympathetic murderer be worth saving from the blade? In French.—*D.D.* (Paris.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE CAVEMAN'S VALENTINE
State, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.
CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON (12/11/00)
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GET OVER IT
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.
O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU? (12/25/00 & 1/1/01)
Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.
TRAFFIC (12/25/00 & 1/1/01)
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.
WHEN BRENDAN MET TRUDY
State.
YI YI (A ONE AND TWO) (1/8/01)
Cinema Village.
YOU CAN COUNT ON ME (12/18/00)
Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.

Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through April 1: "The Films of William Randolph Hearst." March 24 at 2: "Quality Street" (1927, Sidney Franklin; silent). ♦ March 24 at 4: "Beverly of Graustark" (1926, Franklin; silent). ♦ March 25 at 2: "The Pride of Palomar" (1922, Frank Borzage; silent). ♦ March 25 at 4: "The Mask of Fu Manchu" (1932, Charles Brabin and Charles Vidor).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—March 23-April 1: The Third Annual Turkish Film Festival. For details, visit www.turkishamerican.org.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—March 21 at 7:30: "The Wedding March" (1928, Erich von Stroheim; silent). ♦ March 22 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Intruder" (1961, Roger Corman). ♦ March 23 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Rock 'n' Roll High School" (1979, Corman). ♦ March 24: "The Masque of the Red Death" (1964, Corman). ♦ March 25 at 2, 5, and 8: "The Bridge on the River Kwai" (1957, David Lean). ♦ March 26 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "A Day in the Country" (†) and "The People of France" (1936, Jean Renoir; in French). ♦ March 27 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Ladykillers" (†).

CINEMA CLASSICS
332 E. 11th St. (971-1015)—Through March 30: A celebration of the French New Wave. March 21-22 at 8 and 10:20: "The Nun" (1966, Jacques Rivette; in French). ♦ March 23 at 8 and 10 and March 24-25 at 6, 8, and 10: "Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me" (1972, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ March 26 at 8 and 9:50: "The Man Who Left His Will on Film" (1970, Nagisa Oshima; in Japanese). ♦ March 27 at 8 and 10:15: "La Salamandre" (1971, Alain Tanner; in French).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through April 5: "The World of Agnès Varda." All films are in French. March 21 at 2, 6, and 10: "Lions Love (. . . and Lies)" (1968). ♦ March 22-23 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "One Hundred and One Nights" (1995). ♦ March 22-23 at 2:55, 6:25, and 9:55: "The Young Girls Turn 25" (1992). ♦ March 24-25 at 3:10, 6:35, and 10: "Vagabond" (†). ♦ March 24-25 at 1:40, 5:05, and 8:30: "Kung-Fu Master (Le Petit Amour)" (1987). ♦ March 27 at 3:20, 6:30, and 9:40: "Jane B. par Agnès V." (1987). ♦ March 27 at 2, 5:10, and 8:20: "Strange Visits" (1984).

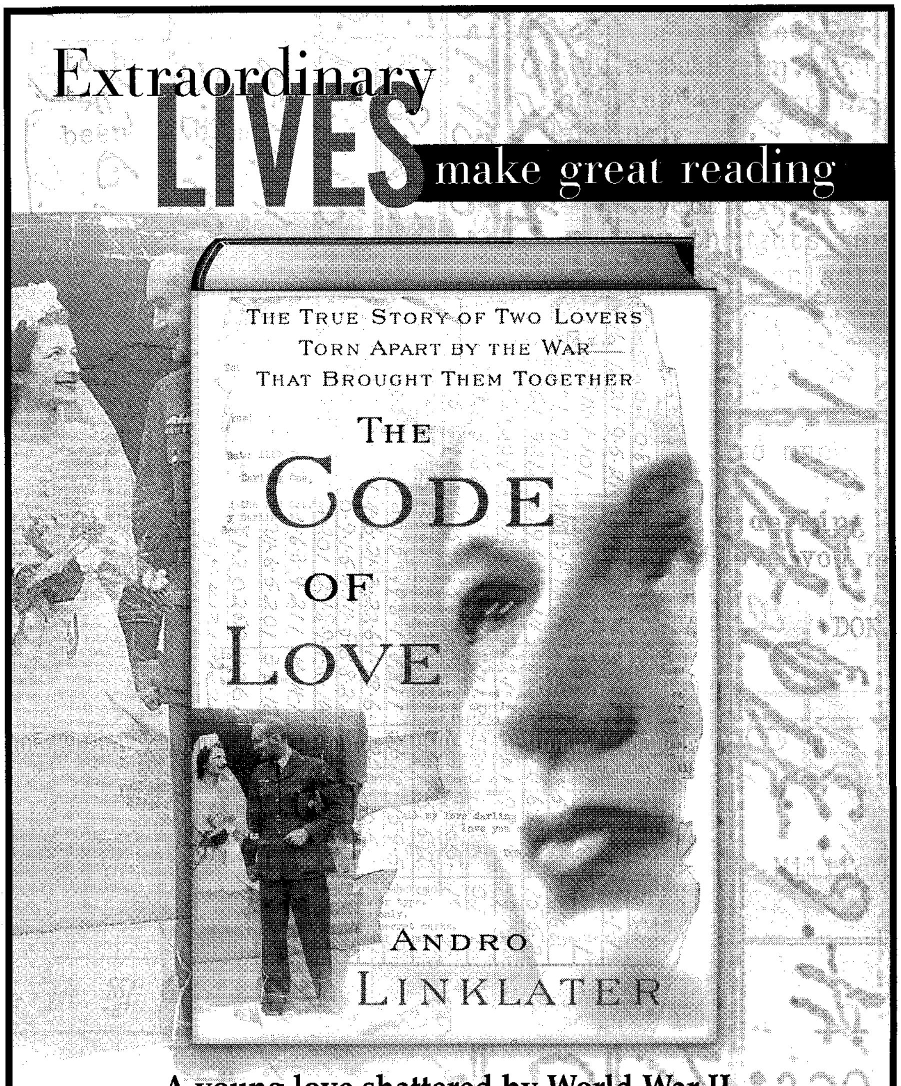
MUSEUM OF TELEVISION & RADIO
25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through April 29: Screenings of "Traffik," the British miniseries that inspired Steven Soderbergh's "Traffic." March 22 at 6 and March 24 at 2: Episodes One and Two. ♦ March 23 at 6 and March 25 at 2: Episodes Three, Four, and Five. ♦ Through May 13: "Nick Park's World: The Eccentric Adventures of Wallace and Gromit." (†) March 21-25 at 1 and March 22-23 at 6.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through April 8: "New Directors/New Films." March 23 at 6 and March 24 at 3: "Bartleby" (2000, Jonathan Parker). ♦ March 23 at 9 and March 24 at noon: "The Cashier Wants to Go to the Seaside" (2000, Dalibor Matanic). ♦ March 24 at 6 and March 25 at 3: "The Day I Became a Woman" (2000, Marziyeh Meshkini; in Farsi). ♦ March 24 at 9 and March 25 at 12: "The Foul King" (2000, Kim Jee-woon; in Korean). ♦ March 26 at 6 and March 27 at 9: "La Faute à Voltaire" (2000, Abdel Kechiche; in French). ♦ March 26 at 9: "On Common Ground" (2000, Jessica Glass and David Eilenberg). ♦ March 27 at 6: "Face" (2000, Junji Sakamoto; in Japanese).

THE SCREENING ROOM
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—March 23-April 5: "Iran Through the Eyes of Children." All films are in Farsi. March 23-24: "The White Balloon" (1996, Jafar Panahi). ♦ March 24-25: "The Mirror" (1998, Panahi). ♦ March 26: "Children of Heaven" (1997, Majid Majidi). ♦ March 27: "Color of Paradise" (1999, Majidi).

SYMPHONY SPACE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Through May 29: "Cinema Italian Style." March 27 at 7: "Nights of Cabiria" (1957, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ March 27 at 9:15: "Seduced and Abandoned" (1963, Pietro Germi; in Italian).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through April 12: "Salt of the Earth: The Cinema of Ermanno Olmi." All films are in Italian. March 21 at 1, 5, and 9, March 23 at 3:15 and 7:15, March 24 at 4:30 and 8:30, and March 26 at 6:15: "The Fiances" (1962). ♦ March 21 at 2:45 and 6:45, March 23 at 1, 5, and 9, and March 24 at 6:15: "The Job" (1961). ♦ March 22 at 1, 5:10, and 9:20 and March 25 at 6:45: "Time Stood Still" (1958). ♦ March 22 at 3 and 7:10 and March 25 at 4:30 and 8:45: "One Fine Day" (1968). ♦ March 26 at 3 and 8: "Cammina, Cammina" (1982).



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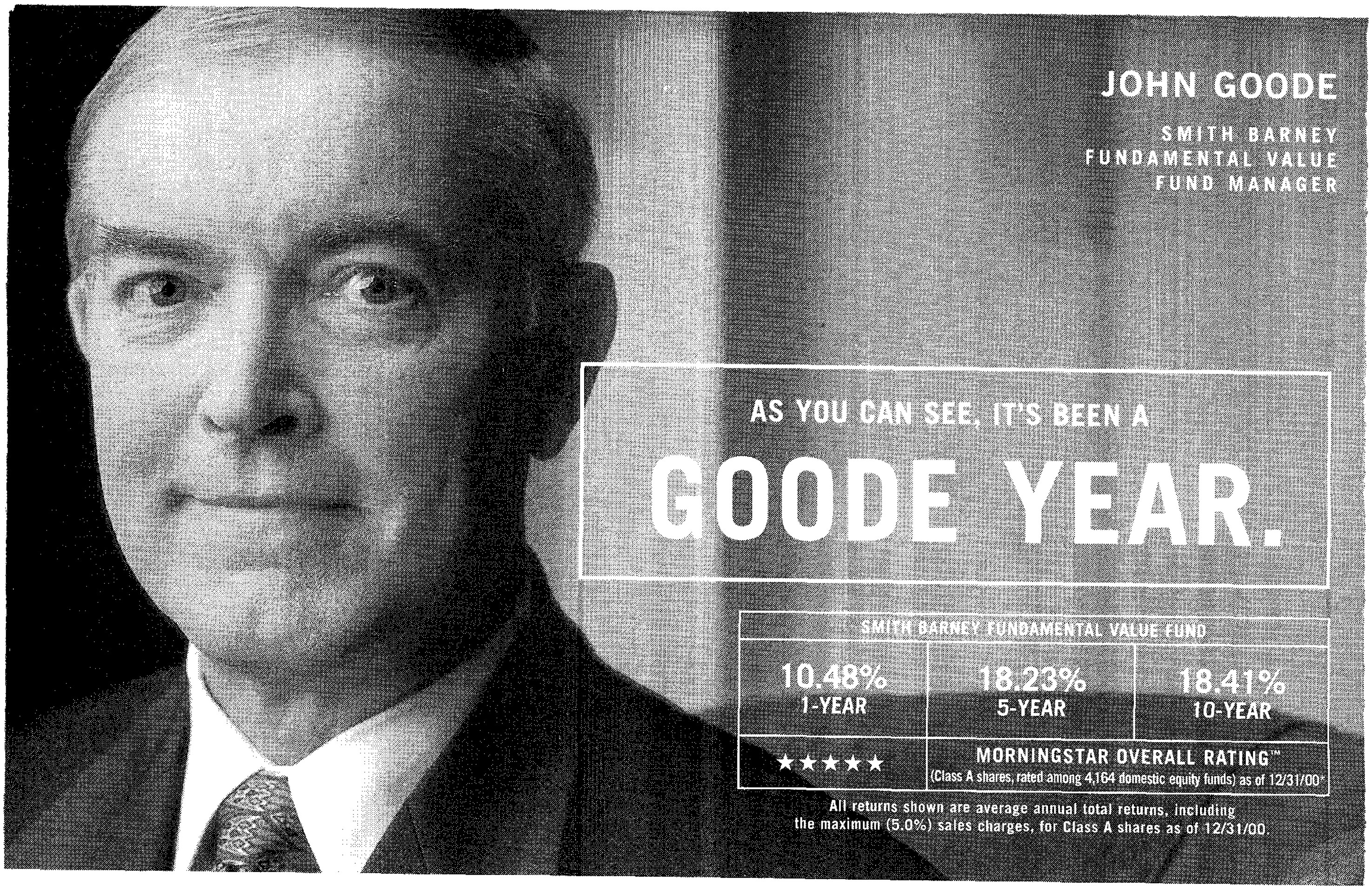
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*Source: Morningstar, Inc. Morningstar proprietary ratings reflect historical risk-adjusted performance as of 12/31/00. The ratings are subject to change each month. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. The ratings are calculated from the Fund's three-, five- and ten-year average annual total returns (if applicable) in excess of 90-day Treasury bill returns (with appropriate fee adjustments) and a risk factor that reflects fund performance below 90-day T-bill returns. The Morningstar Overall Rating is based on the weighted average of the risk-adjusted performance for the three-, five- and ten-year periods.

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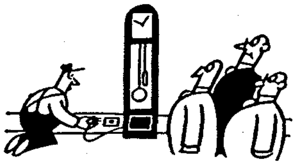
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
DETACHED MAN

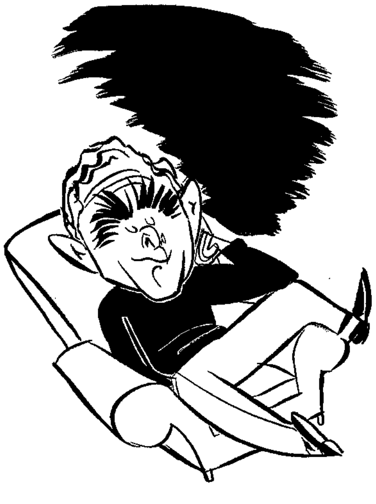


The sky fell last week, and it seemed less alarming than falling skies usually do. The Dow plummeted, Russia helped Iran nuke up, and the world got warmer and warmer, but if you spend a few months soberly predicting that the sky is going to fall—"You know, the sky is overdue for a correction, it can't just hover over our heads indefinitely"—then, when it falls, somehow it just floats on down, at least at first.

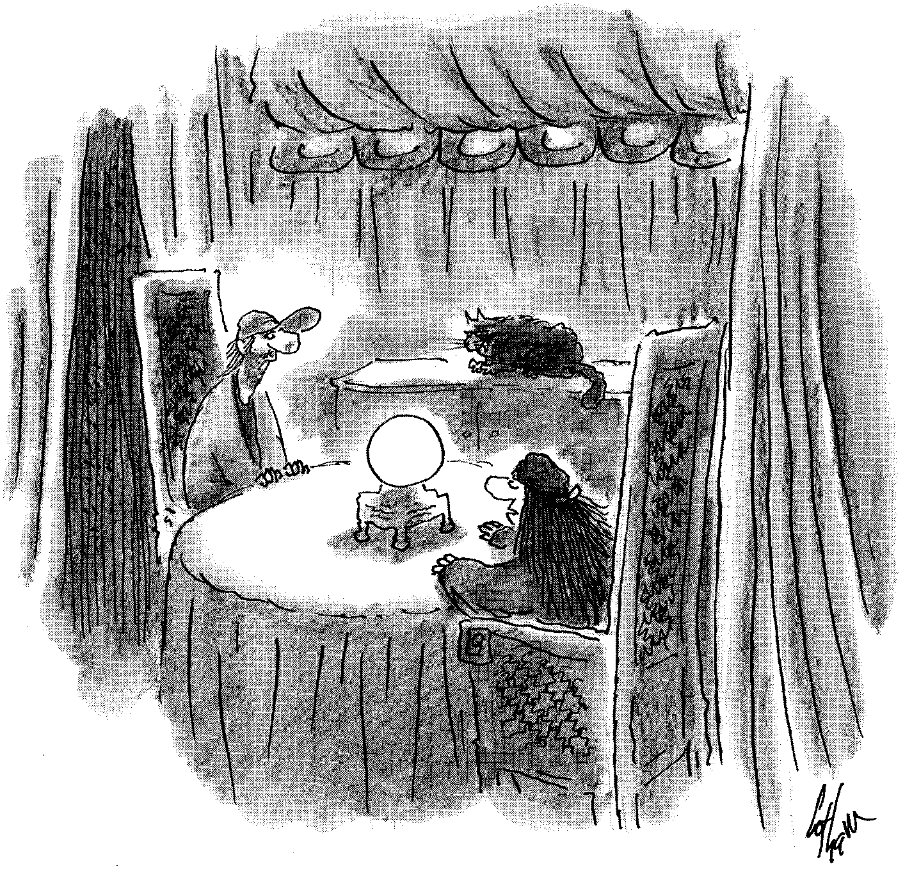
As it fell, reassuring reports kept coming in that the new President was, well, breathing easy. The newspapers and magazines have been filled with accounts of W.'s not doings or not terribly relevant doings—his short hours, his readiness to delegate authority, his desire to see some really sharp duds in the Oval Office. (He has imposed a dress code on his aides.) He chides staff members if they are late—his aides stop important meetings at 7:58 A.M., for fear of being tardy for the eight-o'clock morning meeting—but encourages them to quit work early. He takes breaks in the middle of the day to work out; he doesn't stay in the office past seven. He runs the White House "with the crisp efficiency of a blue-chip corporation," the *Times* gushed, even though it's obvious that what the new President has isn't corporate efficiency (C.E.O.s stay up late) but country-club bonhomie—or is it the kind of country-club bonhomie that ran all those blue-chip corporations into the ground? In any case, it's a style that is fussy in a good-natured, frat-brother manner, right down to the insistence that everyone have a neat crease in his slacks.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

In part, this behavior is a consequence of the preference, in a country devoted to effort, for people who don't seem to need to make any. George W. Bush's trumpeting of his own ease is what Thorstein Veblen, the great theorist of the leisure class, would have called the conspicuous display of an industrial exemption. Anyone can work hard; magic attaches more firmly to someone who makes it through luck and genes, and doesn't seem overly excited about having arrived. (Bill Clinton and Richard Nixon, the Presidents who received the most hostile press of recent years, were both self-made strivers; the princely John F. Kennedy had a hypnotic effect on reporters.)



One would have to be a committed and even embittered partisan not to find something mildly attractive about the new President's indifferences. There is, after all, an ancient and serious case to be made for the detached man—the leader who gets a good night's sleep before the battle, if he doesn't actually sleep right through it. The idea that a gadabout guy who inherits power from a famous father might not do such a bad job as King is one that Shakespeare wrote several good plays to support, and which every monarchist since Samuel Johnson has shared. Their reasons bear the respectable, flip side of Veblen's reasoning: the man with the exemption from industry, who has had power land in his lap, is understandably cheerful and well adjusted—he tends not to brood too much about the injuries he's suffered on the way up, à la Nixon or Richard III. And the argument that the man who is unprepared and open to experience may make a better leader than the man who is stiffened by overpreparation and knows all too well what he wants to do has been made by everyone from Lord Melbourne to Michael Oakeshott, and it isn't trivial, either. The politics of instinct and intuition flourish when the politics of intellect and ideology fail—compare England's political history with Russia's, and you see why, or, anyway, how. And,



"Sometimes the future is bright, sometimes it's dark—it's all cyclical."

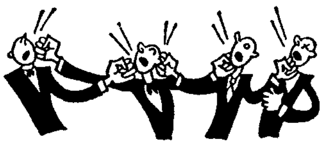
at a still more primal level, one need look no further than a Zen primer, or, for that matter, Yoda, in "The Empire Strikes Back," to grasp the case for the belief that it is the man who is not trying too hard who hits the bull's-eye soonest.

Some mixture of these philosophies, in fact—in an inarticulate, felt form—helped propel George W. into power, and made his dubious ascension remarkably untroubled and uncontested, given what was at stake and what was done to get him here. There is nothing wrong with a guy who's been around power long enough not to be too impressed by it; nothing terrible about someone who relies on human instincts rather than on set dogmas; and something pleasing about a man who is less concerned with making history than with making it home.

The problem may be that no American President can easily be brought to mind who has had all three qualities at the same time—who has been, simultaneously, under-elected, under-prepared, and, apparently, not even all that interested in the job. (Ronald Reagan wasn't unprepared, just ideologically insulated. And, God knows, he was elected. Bill Clinton had no majority, but, God knows, he cared.) Still, there's a first time for everything in politics; Americans discovered that much in the last eight years. It is hard not to feel, though, that the experiment of triple-ply cumulative fecklessness was meant for sunnier climes and solider firmaments, for a sky more securely fastened to the ceiling.

—*Adam Gopnik*

IN THE AISLES
CONCERT RAGE



Why did a man start yelling at a concert of Bach cantatas the other night, at the John Jay College Theatre? From eyewitness accounts, a story of spiralling rage and deepening obsession has emerged. The trouble originated with Peter Sellars, whose controversial opera productions have transplanted classics of the repertory to such settings as Cape Canaveral and Trump Tower. At the invitation of Lincoln Center, Sellars staged Bach's Cantata No. 82, "Ich habe genug" ("I have enough"), as the death scene of a woman in a sick ward. The mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson performed in a thin hospital gown, a light bulb shining in her face. As the concert got under way, a listener on the right-hand aisle started muttering to himself, apparently because he found the production offensive. Another listener asked him several times to be quiet, but the mutterer was undeterred. "This is ridiculous," he was heard to say. "No way to treat Bach." Then, just before the end of the piece, the mutterer belched, and his neighbor let loose with a bloodcurdling cry of "SHUT UP, ALREADY!" The heft and color of the voice recalled Jackie Gleason in his prime. Unfazed, Lieberson launched into the cantata's final aria, whose first words were, conveniently, *"Mein Gott!"*

The "Ich habe genug" affair exemplified the troubling new phenomenon of concert rage: classical-music fanatics who can no longer abide the coughing, muttering, shuffling, and fidgeting of their neighbors. Lincoln Center has become a war zone of withering glances and hissed asides. Unfortunately, the indignation of the annoyed has itself become annoying. The gallery of concert-hall grotesques—the woman who unwraps a lozenge as if it were an unexploded bomb; the man who underscores a moment of Mahlerian heartbreak with a shattering cough; the couple who rush out ten minutes before the end of "Das Rheingold" to catch the 10:23 to Scarsdale—should be expanded to include the vigilantes of musical virtue, who spend more time scowling at their neighbors than looking at the stage. Shush not, lest ye be shushed.

With marketers and educators trying desperately to bring classical music to broader audiences, it seems strange that the inner circles of the initiated are so determined to uphold a stifling code of silence. In all, it might be a good thing that people are making

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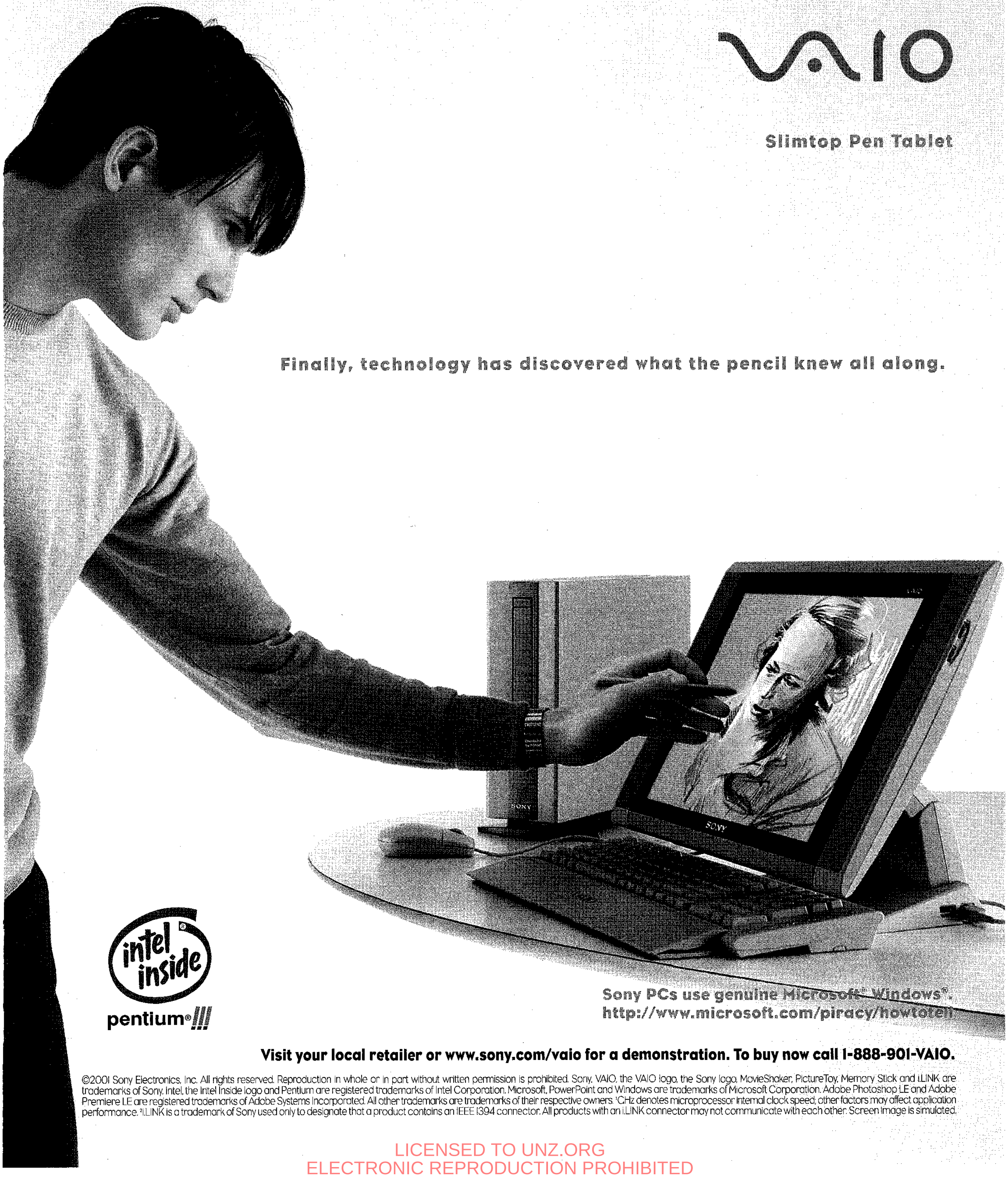

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more noise in the concert hall: audiences have been altogether too sedate since the glory days of Lisztomania and "The Rite of Spring." Great performers deserve bizarre behavior. If Lieberson's performance had been anything less than extraordinary, no one would have bothered to have a nervous breakdown in public. The shouter presumably attacked the mutterer because the singer's hold on him had been broken. In the aria "Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen," Lieberson's total embrace of the music—her reluctance to let go of its repeated phrases, even of its silences—sent the audience into a trance. The result was so far outside everyday experience that some kind of reality check was needed. Still, most members of the audience would probably have preferred to wait a few minutes before being reminded that they were sitting in a theatre on Tenth Avenue.

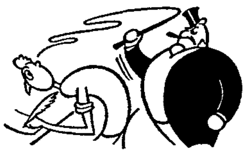
The following afternoon, Thomas Quasthoff gave an equally staggering performance, at Alice Tully Hall, and he offered his own approach to crowd control. There were a few wheezing tubercular outpatients scattered throughout the room, and, with the ease of one who has been through it all, Quasthoff shut them up and won them over. "Do not cough until the concert is ended," he said, after the intermission, "because I love this music so much." There was utter silence for Brahms's "Four Serious Songs." After two encores, a woman headed for the exit, and the singer called out to her, "Wait, I am not done." She missed a shockingly good rendition of "My Way," in idiomatic Hoboken English. Quasthoff is a German baritone who in passing moments sounds like a Russian bass or an Italian tenor. In Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger," the sense of time-and-space-defying trance returned; manipulating the extremes of his voice, he seemed at first to be miles away and then to be inches from our ears. He is only about four feet tall, having been born with a thalidomide disability, but by the end of the day he towered over everyone, like a new god of the concert stage.

In the audience, people were weighing in on the now notorious "Shut up! *Mein Gott!*" incident. The previous night, the performers had supposedly been talking it over backstage, and no one could make sense of it entirely. The conductor Craig Smith, whose Emmanuel Music ensemble had given Lieberson an immaculate accompaniment, was heard to say, "It was nothing like Barcelona." A few minutes later, he said again, "It was nothing like Barcelona." Someone eventually asked him what had happened in Barcelona. He replied, "They threw food."

—*Alex Ross*

DEPT. OF PREVENTION

DON'T BE STUPID, SERIOUSLY



Almost every week, one of Horace Madison's clients telephones the offices of his business-management firm to request a large sum of money for some new extravagance. Whatever the reason, whatever the amount—fifty thousand dollars for a Rolex, two hundred grand for a Bentley—Madison heads to his computer and prints out a version of what he calls "the stupid letter," which he then faxes to the client, demanding a signature.

"By signing the stupid letter, they basically acknowledge that this is a stupid transaction and that we have informed them of the over-all financial consequences of it," Madison says. "We're putting it on record."

Madison is the co-founder of Madison Smallwood Financial Group, which oversees the finances of hip-hop stars. The firm's client list includes Swizz Beatz, DMX, Eve, both members of OutKast, two members of Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, Kelly Price, and Lisa (Left Eye) Lopes, of TLC—though Madison chose not to specify who among them may or may not have received a stupid letter. On a recent afternoon, Madison was in his Third Avenue office, preparing the stupid letter for a client who had requested that a pair of checks, totalling five thousand dollars, be sent to two friends. "This is pretty typical," he said, shaking his head. The letter read:

> This letter shall serve as written confirmation of your request to pay two "verbal" invoices. These invoices represent your instructions for us to pay your two "friends." . . . You have to stop allowing these (and other) people to take advantage of your kindness. Further, you realize, I am not going to continue to allow you to make terrible financial moves. This is your chance to be set up for life. I can't imagine you working a 9-5 someday because you had to take care of everybody around you. . . . Going forward, "if it ain't in the budget, it doesn't exist!" I refuse to stand by and let you hurt yourself financially.
>
> Seriously,
> Horace

Once the letter had been faxed, Madison began taking calls, using a telephone headset. He was wearing a thick blue turtleneck sweater, and he picked at a platter of takeout pasta with salmon as he talked. Above him hung a photograph of Eve, the so-called first lady of rap, which she had signed "Thanks for making me scared to spend my money."

Madison, who is thirty-five years old, was born in Harlem, brought up in White Plains, and introduced to transactions, both smart and stupid, at American Express. He spent a few years as a stockbroker at Bear Stearns. Last year, he struck out on his own. He had started working with rappers, in the belief that he could protect them from their labels and from their own prodigal tendencies. In the process, he thought, he just might make a few bucks. (His firm takes five per cent of a client's gross.) Rappers need to be obsessively thrifty, he says, because hip-hop fans are notoriously fickle; there are very few performers whose careers span more than two or three albums. Madison figures that his stars have three or four years to earn real money, so every unbudgeted outlay brings on a lecture. He likes to tell them, "I don't want to see you—or me—on VH1's 'Behind the Music.' "

"The stories I've heard," he said. "I've got a client whose live-in woman found the apartment he was keeping for a girlfriend. He called me and was, like, 'My lady found the apartment and she cleaned out the place. Now I've got to buy new furniture!' " That gentleman received the stupid letter.

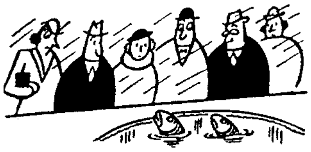
Earlier in the day, a well-known client had come by the office to pick up twenty thousand dollars in cash—a "loan" to a relative. "Who's going to pay back a millionaire rap producer?" Madison later wondered aloud. "It doesn't happen." Off went another stupid letter.

Madison was interrupted by a call from a credit-card company, which was seeking thirty-nine thousand dollars from a client whose bill was allegedly overdue. "There is absolutely no point in threatening to sue," Madison said calmly into his headset. He offered some vague assurances, then hung up. "Usually, I require that my clients rip up their credit cards," he said. "Or I make sure the cards are capped with a three-thousand-dollar limit, especially when these guys are on tour."

Another call came in. It was the client who wanted to give his two "friends" five thousand dollars. "The checks were cut Friday," Madison told the caller. "I sent them out"—he paused to choose the right word—"begrudgingly."

—*David Segal*

THE FISH MARKET
THE ART OF SELLING SHRIMP WITH THEIR HEADS STILL ON



One of the great things about New York is that on any given morning there are people convening with the sole purpose of fundamentally changing not only the city but the whole country, in ways one can't possibly imagine. Just after 11 A.M. on a recent Thursday, for instance, Joe Klaus, Lila Gault, and Shawn Starbuck sat down at a conference table in an office building facing Union Square and began fine-tuning their strategy for getting Americans to start serving shrimp with the heads still on.

"Look, the world likes its shrimp with the head on," Klaus began. "Europe, Asia, South America—they can't believe we serve only the tails. Why? Because all the flavor is in the head." Gault and Starbuck nodded. "I mean, Asians take the head off, get in there, and eat the pancreas and innards and all that. Now, I'm not saying that's going to happen here anytime soon."

"No, no," Gault agreed. "That would be a tough sell."

Klaus, a forty-year-old Pennsylvanian with a goatee and a bit of a paunch, is the director of marketing for Empress International, a seafood-importing company based on Long Island. He had taken a morning train into the city to meet with Gault and Starbuck, principal and associate, respectively, of Gault Communications, a marketing and public-relations firm that specializes in food and wine. (Other Gault clients include Washington apples, Oregon wine, and Northwest cherries.) Empress is the largest U.S. importer of what are known in the seafood business as head-on, or whole, shrimp—that is, shrimp that have not had their pointy little heads (and accompanying spindly antennae and beady eyes) removed.

Americans love shrimp (it and salmon are the two most popular seafood dishes here), but they tend to find the heads unappetizing. So, Klaus says, only about five per cent of the nine hundred and fifty million pounds of shrimp eaten here annually still have their heads on.

"Why?" Klaus asked again. "Don't we eat soft- and hard-shell crabs, not to mention lobsters, with their heads on?"

"That's a great analogy," Gault said.

Starbuck added, "And soft-shell crabs are very hot right now."

"Can whole shrimp be served cold, for shrimp cocktail?" Gault asked.

Klaus: "Absolutely. You just peel the head and eat."

Starbuck: "But is there any, sort of, any—?"

Gault: "Goo?"

Klaus: "Well, some. That's the flavor."

Starbuck: "Does it look weird?"

Klaus: "You're asking the wrong person."

Klaus, who formerly owned a seafood restaurant in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, said he'd recently spoken with a seafood professor at the Culinary Institute of America about shrimp with their heads still on. "I talked profitability," he recalled. "As a chef, I know that head-on shrimp are usually cheaper." He mentioned something called plate coverage. "The heads take up a lot of space, so you don't need to use as many shrimp per plate."

Klaus held up a brochure that had a little cartoon shrimp wearing a pair of sunglasses. "We're trying to be a little hip," he said. "If I see another shrimp-boat ad, ugh! I'd like there to be humor. I mean, we're selling dead fish here."

"What about a tag line?" Starbuck asked. If beef is "what's for dinner," and pork is "the other white meat," what are shrimp with their heads still on?

Klaus smiled. "It's all in the head. Or: Heads above the rest." Gault and Starbuck seemed impressed.

It was just past noon, so the three of them took a cab down to the Tribeca Grill, whose executive chef, Don Pintabona, was planning to join them for lunch. Not long ago, he'd put a pasta dish on the menu that included shrimp with their heads still on. Everyone ordered the pasta, except for Klaus, who went with scallops. "Way too much shrimp lately," he said.

Before the main courses arrived, Pintabona asked a waiter to bring out a plate of raw shrimp with their heads still on. They were glistening and opaque, with a bluish tint. Pintabona called them gorgeous. When the pasta arrived, Gault and Starbuck began eating—removing the shrimp heads with their forks, and delicately pushing them to the side of their plates. Pintabona, however, turned to the waiter and said, "Excuse me, could you send these back? These shrimp have their heads still on." Everyone at the table laughed.

—*Zev Borow*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE
MANIC MONDAY (AND OTHER POPULAR DELUSIONS)

Last Monday, I turned on CNBC, the financial-news station, and happened on a car wreck. By 10 A.M., the Dow was down a couple of hundred points, the Nasdaq was dropping, and CNBC was in full crisis mode, bombarding us with news about fearful investors and the gloomy things "traders"—who are these wise and mystical traders?—were saying. Each moment brought a new set of empty indicators. There was talk of "margin selling" and "capitulation." I went out for a while, and when I came back there was a new anchor on the screen, explaining all over again how the market was in a tailspin and how Wall Street saw no clear sign of a bottom, no reason to buy. The doomsday boys kept it up all afternoon. Emblazoned on the screen were the words "Manic Monday." By the market's close, the Dow had lost more than four hundred points.

Wednesday brought another barrage. CNBC was still wallowing in despair, its hosts carrying on like the bit players in an Irwin Allen disaster film: *We're all going to die!* For the last hour of the market day, CNBC stationed Ron Insana on the floor of the Stock Exchange—a correspondent in the land of panic—and broadcast him speaking grandly about the bulls and the bears battling it out, as if this were Agincourt. The funny thing was that nothing real seemed to have provoked the panic. Oh, people were apparently worried that Japanese banks were going under. But we'd known for a very long time that Japanese banks were in trouble. So what was going on? People were selling because other people were selling. They were afraid because they were being told that everyone else was afraid.

Watching CNBC those two days provided a lesson in how pointless such minute-by-minute coverage of the stock market is—how it distorts the way the market works and helps turn what should be a diverse, independent-thinking crowd of investors into a herd acting upon a single collective thought (in this case, SELL!). Of course, this was true when the market was on the way up, too. The Internet bubble and last week's sell-off are flip sides of the same phenomenon, the inevitable result of obsessing over the market's intraday movements. It's what makes the market so susceptible to bouts of both hysterical exuberance and despair.

As a rule, the more information markets have, the better. But often what CNBC and the other pillars of market journalism offer is not information. It's noise. When it comes to buying a stock, "information" would include a company's growth prospects, its financial statements, its management, its industry, and, yes, its share price. "Noise" is just about everything else, including the chart showing the performance of that stock between 9:30 A.M. and 11:23 A.M. and the random thoughts of anonymous traders attempting to quantify the amount of fear in the market. Last week, we got noise, and trading on the basis of noise. When that happens, the stock market—which is, for most people, the obvious example of how markets work—ceases to function as a market at all.

Markets, of course, are smarter than their participants, but it's easy to forget the circumstances under which they work. The analyst Paul Johnson devised an experiment while he was teaching at Columbia business school: each March, he had every member of his class predict the Oscar winners in twelve categories. Without fail, the group's picks—the nominees who, in each of the twelve categories, were picked by most people in the class—were more accurate than those of even the most prescient individual. In 1998, for instance, the group got eleven out of twelve winners right, while the best individual got nine, and the average person only five.

More proof that markets outsmart mavens, yes. But there's something else. Johnson's students made their decisions independently. There may have been some kibbitzing, but, ultimately, everyone made his choices on his own, relying on whatever information about the Oscars he deemed important. And the collective result of all that independent decision-making was near-perfect. This is how markets normally work.

If, on the other hand, a chorus of commentators had sat in the classroom with the students and overwhelmed them with frenzied observations—"Traders are seeing a skewed put/call ratio on 'Chocolat'!"—the group's collective intelligence would have vanished. Likewise, when you're buying a TV set you don't want a crew of experts yelling in your ear about what every other TV shopper in America is thinking. You want to decide, quietly and with whatever information you deem important, whether you should pay for a flat screen. A market is best at setting prices when the people in it make their decisions on their own. Its collective wisdom arises out of the cumulative effect of millions of independent decisions. You don't get that wisdom in a world dominated by CNBC-style coverage. In that world, every decision becomes dependent. And, in certain circumstances (like last week's), you end up with a mob instead of a market.

Not a good thing. "Crowds distort and magnify threats out of all proportion to reality," Donald Horowitz, a Duke professor who is an expert on crowd behavior, said last week. Crowds also tend to take on the disposition of their most extreme members. That's why, according to one researcher, ordinary people in a large crowd will sometimes bait a man who is threatening suicide to leap off a ledge. It just takes someone to get them started. *Jump!* one kook yells, and the call is quickly taken up. Now add CNBC and a nation of viewers. All together now: Jump! Jump! Jump!

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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Robert M. Sapolsky
A Primate's Memoir

AFRICAN JOURNAL

CITY OF NOMADS

A European living in the back streets and riding the rails.

BY RYSZARD KAPUSCINSKI

MY ALLEYWAY

The apartment that I rent in Lagos is constantly broken into. It happens not only when I'm away for a long stretch of time but also when I take a short trip to a nearby town, to Abeokuta or Oshogbo. I know, on my return, I will find that my window has been popped out of its frame, that the furniture has been turned upside down, and that the cupboards have been emptied.

The apartment is in the center of town, on an island. The island was once a marketplace for slave traders, and somehow you are always conscious of its shameful, dark origins. There's something restless and violent about the place, and you are made aware of it all the time. I may be in a taxi, chatting with the driver, when suddenly he falls silent. "What's wrong?" I ask. "Very bad place!" he answers, lowering his voice, nervously surveying the street. We drive on, he relaxes, and our conversation resumes. Sometime later, we pass a group of men walking along the edge of the road (there are no sidewalks), and once again the driver falls silent. "What is it?" I ask. "Very bad people!" he says. It's another half mile or so before he is calm enough to speak again.

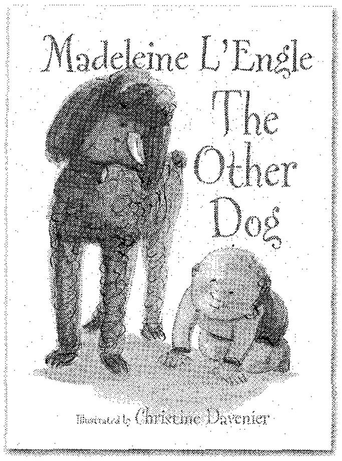
In my driver's head there must be a map of the city, perhaps one that resembles the kind that hangs on the walls of police stations. On it are multicolored warning lights, constantly flashing, signalling places of danger. The lights are especially numerous where I live—not in one of those luxurious, vigilantly guarded neighborhoods of rich Nigerians, Europeans, or diplomats but on an African street, in an African building. It is not a simple thing for a white man to move into an African neighborhood. The Europeans are outraged. I must be deranged, not in complete possession of my faculties. They try to dissuade me, warn me. I will perish, they say. It is certain. The only thing in doubt is the way I will perish—I will either be killed or simply die of disease—so dreadful are the living conditions.

But the Africans also regard my plan with little enthusiasm. Live where, exactly? they ask. The district is poor and overcrowded, a shantytown of wretched little houses, with no fresh air and often no electricity; it is dust, stench, and insects. Where will I find a corner of my own? How will I get around? What will I do for water? Water must be brought from the other end of the street, because that's where the pump is. Children do this. Sometimes women. Men? Never. A white gentleman standing in line with the children for the pump? Ha! That's impossible! Or, let's say you find a small room somewhere, and you want to shut the door in order to work. Shut the door? That's unthinkable. We all live together: children, adults, old people—we are never apart. Shut yourself in a room so that no one can enter? Ha! That's impossible! "And besides," the Africans gently explain to me, "it is dangerous. There are bad people around here. The worst are the roving gangs—groups of debauched hoodlums, who attack, mug, and rob, a dreadful swarm of locusts that ravages everything. They will quickly sniff out that a lone European has come to live here. And to them a European is a rich man. Who will protect you then?"

But I held firm. I didn't listen to the warnings. My mind was made up—perhaps in part because so often I had felt irritated with people who arrived here, lived in "little Europe" or "little America" (i.e., in luxury hotels), and departed, boasting later that they had been to Africa, a place that in reality they had never seen.

And suddenly an opportunity arose. I met an Italian, Emilio Madera, who owned a little warehouse of farm implements in a back alley not far from Massey Street. Like many whites who were gradually liquidating their enterprises here, he had closed his business. The two-room service apartment above it was now

In every home there should be at least
two dogs!



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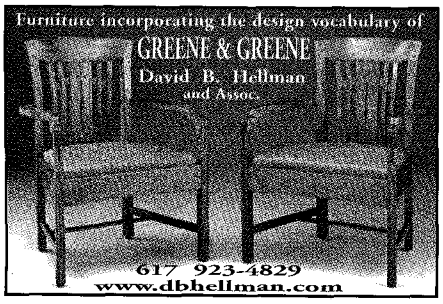
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vacant, and he was all too happy to rent it to me. He drove me there one evening and helped me carry up my things (the metal stairs were attached to the building's outside wall). It was pleasantly cool inside, for Emilio had turned on the air-conditioner that morning. There was also a working refrigerator. Emilio wished me a good night and left. He was flying to Rome early the next morning—after the latest military coup, he was afraid of further unrest and wanted to take some of his money out of the country.

I began to unpack. An hour later, the lights went out.

I didn't have a flashlight. Worse, the air-conditioner had also stopped. It was March, a month of crushing heat, when the nights often seemed hotter and more stifling than the days. I looked out the window. Up and down the street, half-naked people lay on mats or directly on the ground. The women and children were asleep; several men, their backs leaning against the walls of the wretched little houses, stared at me. I opened the window. In swept the stench of rotten fruit, burnt oil, soap, and urine. Although the sea was somewhere nearby, there was no breeze; the alley was enclosed and congested.

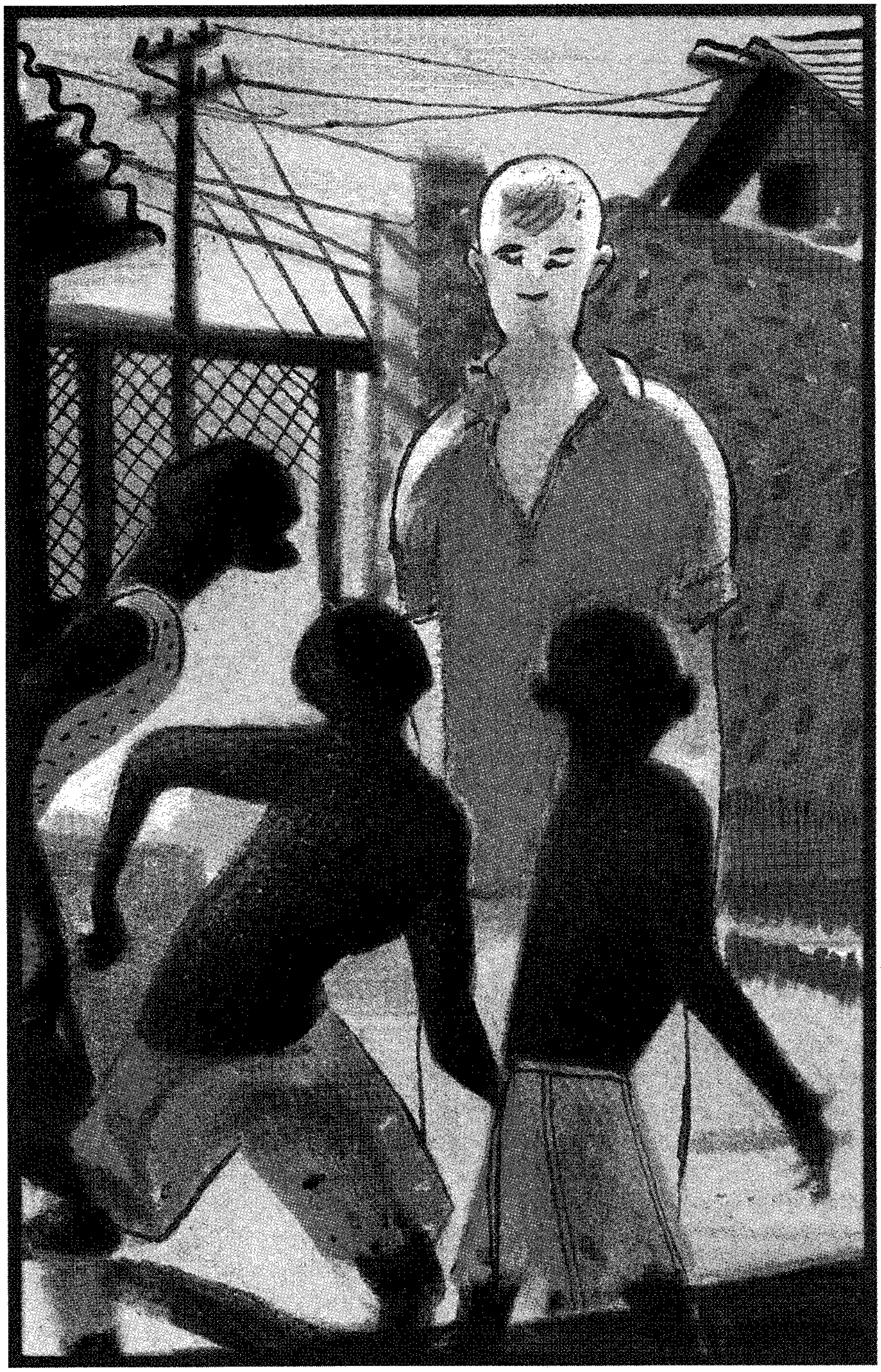
I decided that I could not endure these sweltering rooms until dawn, and went down. Two men rose; the others watched, motionless. We were all sweaty, dead tired. I asked if this kind of electrical outage happened often. They didn't know. I asked if something could be done about it. They conversed among themselves in a language I did not understand. One of them disappeared. Minutes passed—fifteen, thirty, forty-five. Finally he returned, accompanied by two young men. They said that they could fix the problem for ten pounds. I agreed. Soon, the lights were back on inside the apartment, and the air-conditioner was working.

Several days later, another outage, another ten pounds. Then fifteen, twenty.

And the thefts? In the beginning, I was filled with rage each time I returned to my ransacked apartment. To be robbed is to be made a fool of. It's humiliating. But in time I came to understand that my seeing a robbery as a humiliation is an emotional luxury. A theft, even a petty theft, can be a death sentence. A solitary woman had her little corner on my street, and her sole possession was a pot. She made a living buying beans on credit from the vegetable venders, cooking them, seasoning them, and selling them to passersby. For many, these beans were the only daily meal. One night, a piercing cry awoke us. The entire alleyway stirred. The woman was running around in a circle, despairing, frenzied: thieves had snatched her pot, the one thing she depended on for her livelihood.

Many of my neighbors have only the one thing. Someone has a shirt, someone a panga, someone a pickaxe. The one with a shirt can find a job as a night watchman (no one wants a half-naked guard); the one with a panga can be hired to cut down weeds; the one with the pickaxe can dig a ditch. Others have only their muscles to sell. They count on someone needing them as porters or messengers. In all these instances, the chances of employment are slim; competition is fierce. And, furthermore, these are frequently only odd jobs—for one day, for several hours.

And so my alley and its adjacent streets are full of idle people. They wake in the morning and search for some water with which to wash their faces. Those who


People warn me that I will perish if I move there; the only thing in doubt is how.

LORENZO MATTOTTI

THANKED BE FORTUNE

Did we live a double life?
I would have said
we never envied
the epic glory of the star-crossed.
I would have said
we learned by heart
the code marriage makes of passion—
duty dailyness routine.
But after dark when we went to bed
under the bitter fire
of constellations—
orderly, uninterested and cold,
at least in our case—
in the bookshelves just above our heads,
all through the hours of darkness,
men and women
wept, cursed, kept and broke faith
and killed themselves for love.
Then it was dawn again.
Restored to ourselves,
we woke early and lay together
listening to our child crying, as if to birdsong,
with ice on the windowsills
and the grass eking out
the last crooked hour of starlight.

—*Eavan Boland*

have a bit of money buy themselves breakfast: a cup of tea, a roll. Many people don't eat anything. Even before noon, the heat is difficult to bear, and everyone looks for a shady spot. The shade moves with the sun, and everyone moves with the shade—following it, crawling after it to hide in its darkness. For many, this is the only occupation of the day. Hunger. One badly wants to eat, but there is nothing to be had. Making matters worse, the smell of roasting meat wafts from a nearby bar. Why don't these people storm the bar?

One of them, apparently, was unable to control himself, for suddenly a cry resounds: it's a street vender shouting—a boy has snatched a bunch of bananas from her stand. The victim and her neighbors set off in pursuit and eventually catch him. The police appear out of nowhere. Policemen here carry large wooden clubs, with which they brutally beat offenders. The boy is lying in the street now, cringing, curled up, trying to shield himself from the blows. A crowd has gathered—the legions of the unemployed have little to do besides waiting for some event, some commotion, some excitement. They press closer and closer, as if the dull thud of the clubs and the moans of the victim afforded them genuine pleasure. They encourage and incite the policemen. Here, when a thief is caught, people want to tear him apart, lynch him, chop him into pieces. The boy is groaning; he has let go of the bananas. Those standing closest throw themselves on the fruit, tear the bunch apart.

Then everything returns to normal. The vender still complains and curses, the policemen leave, the battered, tortured boy drags himself to a hiding place, sore and desperate. The onlookers disperse, returning to their places beside walls, under roofs—to the shade, where they remain until evening.

That's when the alley's residents reassemble. Some have malaria and have spent the whole day here. Others are just returning from the city. Some have had a good day: they may have found work or met with one of their kinsmen, who shared his pennies with them. They will be eating supper tonight—a bowl of cassava with a hot paprika sauce, perhaps accompanied by a boiled egg or even a piece of lamb.

Whoever has a shilling goes to the bar. The bars are numerous—in the back streets, at intersections, in the squares—and are often quite humble places, their walls made from corrugated iron, with calico curtains instead of doors. The music comes from an old radio, and a red light bulb dangles from the ceiling. Photographs of film actresses cut out of magazines adorn the walls. Behind the counter stands the proprietress, fat and powerfully built. She sells the only thing that is available in the bar—a home-brewed beer. The beers can be brewed from any number of fruits and vegetables—bananas, corn, pineapples, palms. Generally, the proprietress specializes in one kind. A glass of this stuff has three obvious merits: first, it contains alcohol; second, being a liquid, it quenches thirst; and, third, the thick, dense solution constitutes an ersatz nourishment. If someone has earned only a shilling in the course of a day, he will most probably spend it in a bar.

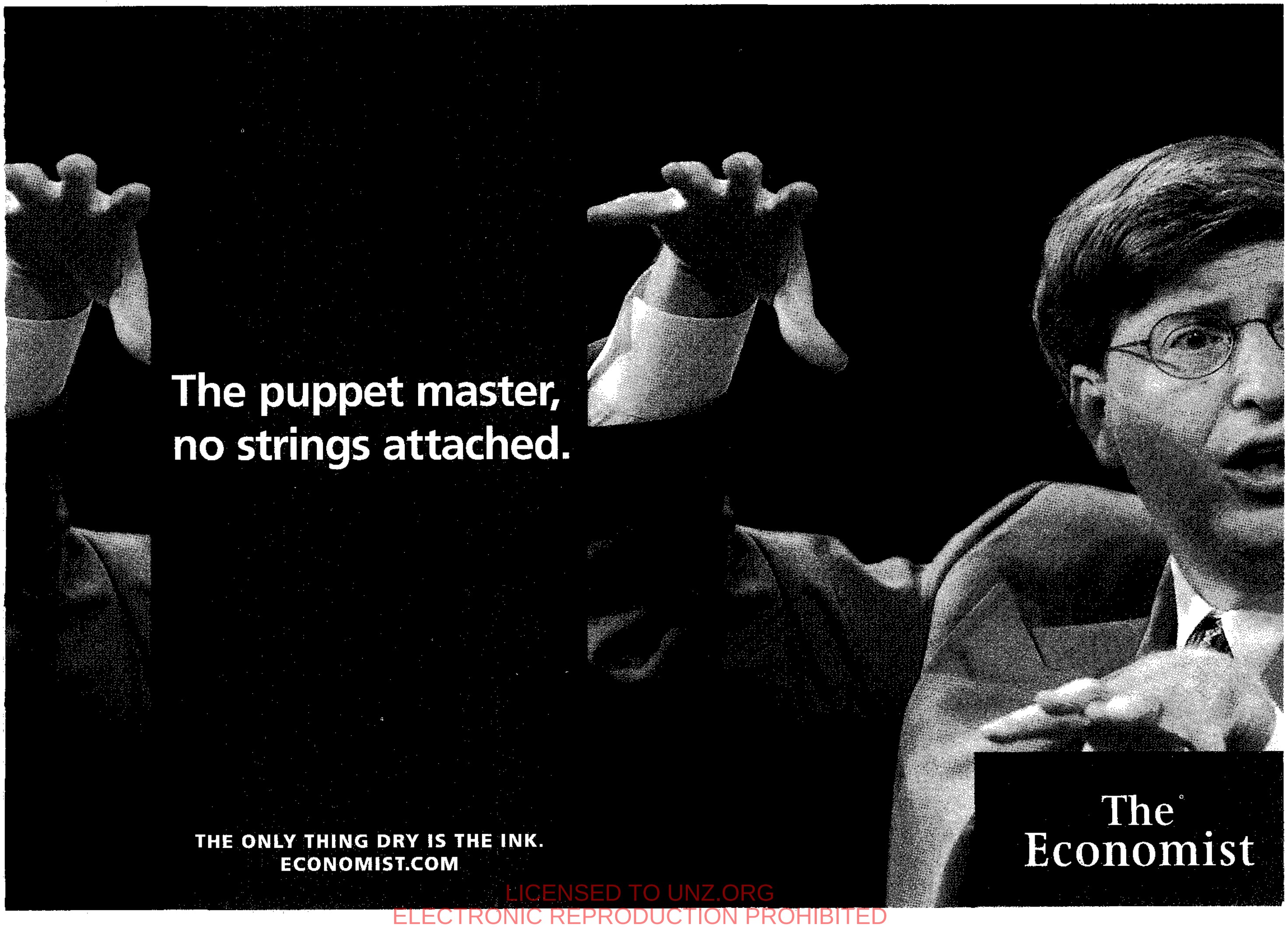
The people who pass through my alley are the city's eternal nomads. Everything in their life is temporary. They live in a state of unabating fear. They fled the poverty of the countryside and made their way to the city in the hope that life would be better. Those who succeeded in tracking down a cousin have had help getting started. But many do not find a cousin. Often, they don't even understand the language; they don't know how to ask about anything.

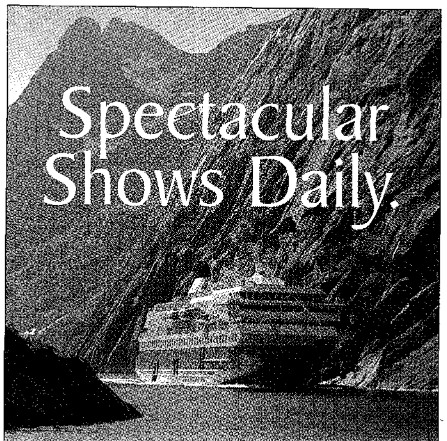
They build a roof over their heads, some little corner, a nook of their own. They have no money—having come from traditional villages, where money is not commonly used—and look for a place in the slums, a marsh, a quagmire, a piece of barren desert, some terrible plot, usually designated by the municipal authorities for these new arrivals to the city. The sight is extraordinary. Someone erects a shack. Someone else puts up another one. And then another. Thus, spontaneously, a street is formed. Nearby, another street is advancing. Eventually, they meet and create an intersection. Both streets spread, divide, branch out. And a neighborhood comes into being. All the time, people are collecting building materials. On their heads, on their backs, under their arms, they appear with pieces of corrugated iron, boards, plywood, plastic, cardboard, automobile parts, crates; and all this they assemble, erect, nail, and glue into something halfway between a cabin and a lean-to, and the walls configure themselves into an improvised, colorful collage. Because the floor of the shack often consists of swampy ground or sharp rocks, they line it with elephant grass, banana leaves, raffia, or rice straw. An entire city erected without a single brick, steel beam, or piece of glass!

But the shantytowns have a short life. I witnessed one being razed, not far from my alley. The shacks had reached the shore of the island. The military government deemed this unacceptable. Trucks filled with policemen arrived in the morning. A crowd gathered, and the police moved into the settlement, driving out the inhabitants. A cry went up, there was turmoil. Bulldozers materialized, enormous bright-yellow Caterpillars, and a moment later there were clouds of dust and debris as the machines advanced, demolishing street after street and leaving trampled, bare earth behind. That day, the alley filled up with refugees. It was especially crowded and noisy, and even more stifling.

One day, I had a visitor. He was a middle-aged man in a white djellabah. His name was Suleiman, and he hailed from northern Nigeria. He had once worked for my Italian landlord as a night watchman. He knew the street and the surrounding neighborhood. He acted shy, and didn't want to sit down in my presence. He asked if I needed a night watchman, for he had just lost his job. I said I didn't, but he made a good impression on me and I gave him five pounds. A few days later, he came again. This time he sat down. I made him some tea, and we started to talk. I told him about how I was being continually robbed. Suleiman considered this completely normal. Theft is a method—admittedly an unpleasant one—of lessening inequality. It is good that they rob me, he declared. It can even be seen as a friendly gesture on the part of the perpetrators—their way of letting me know that I am useful, and, therefore, that they accept me. Basically, I can feel safe. Have I ever felt threatened here? No, I had to admit. Well, there you go! I will be safe here as long as I let myself be freely robbed. The moment I inform the police, and they start to pursue the thieves, I would be advised to move away.

He came again a week later. I gave him tea. He drank, and then said in a mysterious tone that he would take me to the Jankara Market, where we would make an appropriate purchase. The Jankara Market is where witch doctors, herbalists, fortune-tellers, and exorcists sell all manner of amulets, talismans, divining rods, and magical medicines. Suleiman walked from table to table, looking, asking. Finally, he indicated that I should buy a bunch of white rooster feathers from a certain woman. They were expensive, but I did as I was instructed and purchased the feathers. We returned to the





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alley. Suleiman arranged the feathers, tied them together with a piece of thread, and hung them from the top of my door frame.

From that moment on, nothing disappeared from my apartment. (1967)

MADAME DIUF ON THE TRAIN

At dawn, the station in Dakar is empty. I am going to Bamako, but there is only one train and it does not leave until noon. Trains are scarce in Senegal. In the entire country there is only one international rail connection, to the capital of Mali, Bamako. That train runs only twice a week. Usually, there is no one at the station. I even have difficulty finding the cashier, who, it is said, is also the stationmaster.

By the time the first passengers appear, the sun is already high in the sky. They take their places in the compartments unhurriedly. The cars here seem smaller than European ones, the tracks narrower, the compartments more cramped. I sit with two young people I met on the platform, Edgar and Clare, Scots from Glasgow, who are travelling from Casablanca to Niamey. "Why from Casablanca to Niamey?" They have difficulty answering. It's what they are doing. They are together, and that, it seems, is enough. What did they see in Casablanca? Nothing, really. And in Dakar? Nothing much. They are not interested in sightseeing; they want only to travel. What is important is the route, and experiencing this route together. They look very much alike: pale complexions, which in Africa look almost transparent; light-brown hair; many freckles. Their English is very Scottish, and I understand little of it. For a while, it's just the three of us in the compartment, but just before we leave we are joined by a heavy, energetic woman in an ample, puffy, bright-colored boubou, the local ankle-length dress. "Madame Diuf!" she declares, by way of introduction, and settles herself comfortably on the bench.

We set off. The train rolls along the edge of colonial Dakar. Dakar is a coastal city, beautiful, pastel-colored, picturesque, amid beaches and terraces. It resembles Naples slightly, or suburbs of Marseilles or Barcelona. Palm trees, gardens, cypresses, bougainvillea. Stepped streets, hedges, lawns, fountains. There are boutiques and hotels and restaurants. The train gathers speed, and then suddenly our compartment is dark. There is a loud thud, and outside we hear the sound of something crashing. Someone screams. The young Scot, Edgar, is trying to shut the window—clouds of dust, garbage, and debris are pouring through it—and I lunge out of my seat to help him.

What has happened? Outside, I see that we've left the lush, flowering gardens and that we are in some kind of desert. It's very busy. There are shacks and lean-tos, a sandy sprawling neighborhood of squalor, typical, I realize, of the depressing bidonvilles that surround most African cities. But this bidonville is so cramped, the shacks and lean-tos so crowded and pressed together, that the only remaining space for a market is on the train tracks and the embankment. The women, I now understand, were displaying their merchandise on the tracks—bananas, tomatoes, soap, candles—standing next to one another, elbow to elbow, when, suddenly, here comes the train. No one knows, of course, exactly when the train is going to arrive, and, because it comes barrelling out from around a bend, no one can see it coming. So, when it appears, there is only one thing to do: run as fast as your legs will carry you. Terrified, panicked, people start running, grabbing whatever they can manage.

Through the window, I watch them: their faces are full of fright, their hands raised in an instinctively protective gesture. I see people falling, rolling down the embankment, covering their heads, and clouds of sand, flying plastic bags, shreds of paper, rags, bits of cardboard.

It is some time before we emerge on the other side of the market and enter the peaceful, unpopulated savanna of acacias and blackthorn bushes. Madame Diuf says that there are thieves who are lying in wait for the moment when the train knocks down and, in effect, blows up the market. Confusion suits them, and, concealed behind the curtain of dust raised by the train, they pounce upon the scattered merchandise and take away as much as they can.

"*Ils sont malins, les voleurs!*" she exclaims, almost admiringly.

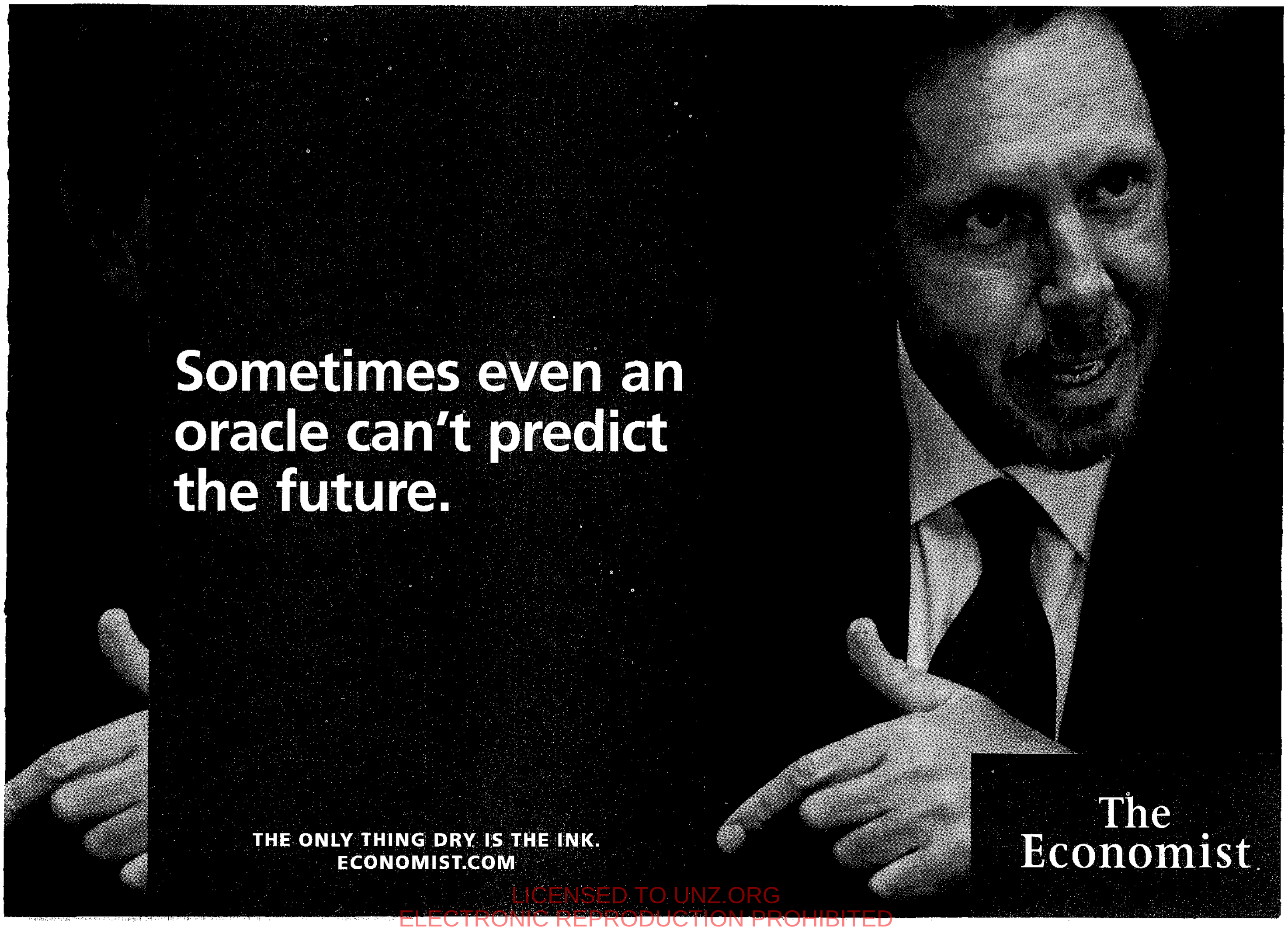
I tell the young Scots that in the last two to three decades the character of African cities has changed, a change that we just witnessed in the passage from the beautiful coastal Dakar to the frightful arid Dakar, the Sahel. In the past, the cities were administrative, commercial, and industrial centers. They were, typically, of moderate size and inhabited mainly by those who had employment there. Today, these cities exist only as a fragment inside the new cities, which even in small and thinly populated countries have expanded monstrously, become great metropolises. In Africa, drought has played its part, descending on the continent in the nineteen-seventies, again in the eighties, and yet again in the nineties. Fields dried up, cattle perished. Millions of people, starving to death, sought salvation in cities where international relief supplies were distributed. (The supplies rarely reached the countryside.) But a clan that has abandoned its fields and lost its herds is unlikely ever to regain them. These people, now permanently condemned to international relief, will live only as long as the supplies are not interrupted.

In countries tormented by civil wars and warlords, the city also promised safety, and the weak and defenseless fled there wanting only to survive. I remember the little towns of eastern Kenya—Mandera, Garissa—during the time of the Somalian war. When evening approached, the Somalians arrived from pastures with their herds and converged around these hamlets, which each night were encircled by a glowing ring of lights: it was the newcomers burning their lamps, tallow candles, torches. They felt calmer closer to town, more secure somehow. At dawn, the Somalians dispersed again, walking with their herds to distant pastures.

In Angola and Sudan, Somalia and Chad, you see the same: millions, tens of millions of people, leaving drought and war for the city. Everywhere: Go to the city! It was an expression of hope as well as an admission of despair. After all, no one was waiting for them there, no one had invited them. They came spurred on by fear, with their last ounces of strength, just to hide; maybe to be saved.

I think of the trackside shantytown we passed, and of the fate of its residents. If the truck does not bring food, they will die of hunger. If the tanker does not bring water, they will die of thirst. They have no reason to go into the city proper; they have nothing to come back to in their village. They cultivate nothing, raise nothing, manufacture nothing. They do not attend schools. They have no addresses, no money, no documents. All of them have lost homes; many have lost their families. They have no one to complain to, no one they can expect anything from.

We are slowing down, nearing a station, and there is a throng of people rushing toward the train, desperate-seeming, like would-be suicides about to fling themselves beneath the wheels. They are women and children, bearing bananas, oranges, grilled corn, dates, laid out on trays that they carry on their heads. They press around the cars and push their goods up to the windows. I can see neither the sellers nor their faces, only competing heaps of bananas, until they are pushed aside by heaps of dates, then heaps of


Sometimes even an oracle can't predict the future.
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watermelons, then tumbling oranges.

Upon seeing the throng, Madame Diuf has commandeered the window and fills the entire span with her magnificent self. She picks through the heaps of fruit swaying above the platform. She haggles, she quarrels. Occasionally, she turns and shows us a bunch of bananas or a ripe papaya. She weighs her loot in her soft, plump hand, and exclaims triumphantly, "*À Bamako? Cinq fois plus cher! À Dakar? Dix fois plus cher! Voilà!*" Then she stashes it on the floor. There aren't many other buyers. Fruit undulates below us, practically untouched. How do these people live? Who knows when the next train will pass this way? No settlement is visible. Who do they sell to?

The train jerks and sets off, and Madame Diuf sits down, satisfied. But she sits in such a way that there is now noticeably more of her. She seems to sprawl imperiously, as if she had decided to liberate her massive body from something that has hitherto been constraining it. She seems to have let her body breathe; it has been set free. The compartment fills up with the expanding Madame, panting and sweaty, who has managed to push Edgar and Clare into one corner. I have been pushed into another corner and have scarcely any room left at all.

The train twists and turns: the Sahel is a sometimes beige, sometimes brown plain, heated by the sun. Every now and then, there are patches of a dry, rough, straw-yellow grass. There are bushes of pink barberries and slender bluish tamarisks. Here and there you spot a thorny acacia. Quiet. Emptiness. The quivering white air of a hot day.

In the large Tambacounda station, the locomotive breaks down. A valve seems to have burst, and a stream of oil trickles down the embankment, where local boys have gathered, hastily filling bottles and cans with it. Other onlookers from the town assemble, and I encourage the two Scots to step outside. They refuse. They do not want to speak to anyone. They do not want to get to know anyone. They tell me that when someone approaches them they turn and walk away. They would prefer to run. They have had some bad experiences. Whenever they engaged in conversation, the person always wanted something from them. Different things—help securing a scholarship, employment, money. This person invariably had sick parents, younger siblings in his care. They may not have eaten for several days. These complaints are constantly repeated. They don't know how to react. They feel helpless. Finally, discouraged, they made a joint decision: no contact, encounters, conversations.

We continued in the evening. It has grown cooler, easier to breathe. We are travelling east, deeper and deeper into the Sahel, through Diboli and Kayes, a large town across the border, in Mali. At each station, Madame Diuf shops. The compartment has filled up with oranges, watermelons, papayas, and grapes; she has also bought carved stools, brass candleholders, Chinese towels, and French soaps. Each transaction is punctuated by her triumphant cries: "*Voilà, messieurs, dames! Combien cela coûte à Bamako? Cinq fois plus cher! Et à Dakar? Dix fois? Bon Dieu! Quel achat!*" Her possessions take up the length of one banquette. The Scots have only a small sliver of a seat left, on the other side of the compartment, which is now packed to the overhead racks with fruit, laundry detergents, blouses, bunches of dried herbs, sacks of seed, millet, and rice. I have lost my seat; I am standing.

I have the impression—although I admit I am feeling a little drowsy and may be coming down with something—that Madame is becoming ever more immense, that there is more and more of her. Her full boubou, which has caught the wind coming in through the window, has swelled and balloons like a sail. Returning home to Bamako, she is proud of her cheap purchases—satisfied, victorious, the whole compartment now filled with her person.

We reach Bamako at four in the morning. The station is full of people, with a dense crowd waiting on the platform. A band of feverish boys bursts into our compartment: Madame's crew, come to carry her purchases. I walk out. A man is shouting. Pushing my way in the direction of his voice, I come upon a Frenchman in a torn shirt sitting on the platform, moaning and cursing. He was robbed of everything the moment he stepped off the train. All he has left is the handle of his suitcase, and he is brandishing this scrap of leather, shaking his fist at the world. (1995) ♦

(Translated, from the Polish, by Klara Glowczewska.)

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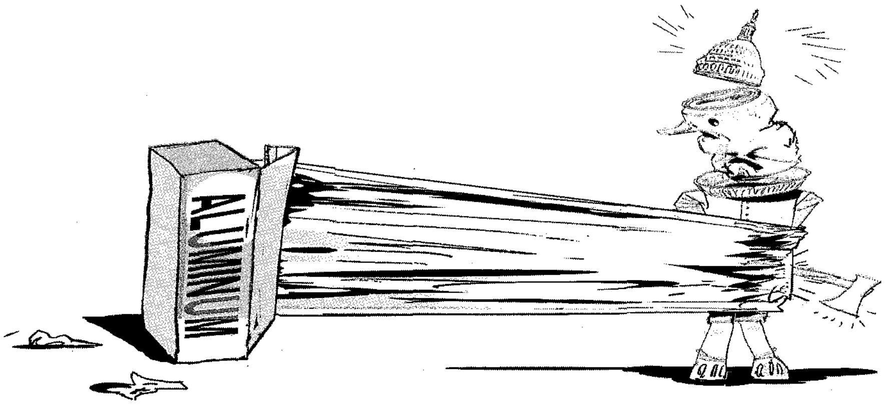
BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY



ISTVAN BANYAI

Treasury Secretary Paul H. O'Neill has decided to keep about $100 million in Alcoa stock and options, giving him perhaps the largest single-company holding that a top government official has ever held.

—*The Times, March 6, 2001.*

March 20th: Speaking before the Association of Wealthy White Male Aluminum Executives today, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill declared that the United States should base its currency on the aluminum standard. The largely wealthy white male aluminum-executive audience reacted warmly to Mr. O'Neill's proposal.

March 22nd: House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt today denounced Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill's plan to base U.S. currency on the aluminum standard, saying, "You shall not crucify mankind on a cross of aluminum."

In response, Mr. O'Neill said, "It's impossible to nail mankind to a cross made from aluminum. Unlike gold, it's too hard. That's just one of the many advantages of this tremendous metal."

April 12th headline, the *Times:*
O'NEILL WARNS OF DANGER OF COPPER POISONING FROM U.S. PENNIES.

May 3rd, Washington: U.S. Treasury Secretary O'Neill today raised hackles in Moscow and Tokyo by telling the visiting head of Russia's Navy that last year's Kursk submarine disaster would not have happened if the vessel had been built "with good American aluminum." He then pointed to the recent sinking of the Japanese ship Ehime Maru by the attack submarine U.S.S. Greeneville as evidence of aluminum's "marvellous durability," saying that the sub had needed only a "little paint touch-up" after ramming and sinking the five-hundred-ton vessel.

June 3rd: Following another high-school shooting rampage, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill issued a stern warning to the gun manufacturer Smith & Wesson today, saying that the nickel-plated .357 Magnum revolver used in the shooting posed an "intolerable" health risk. He said that, unless the company immediately switched to aluminum plating on its .357 Magnums, he would instruct the Bureau of Aluminum, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to seize S. & W.'s entire line of nickel-plated handguns.

July 4th: Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill told a gathering of the Daughters of the American Revolution that the American colonists would have "finished off the Brits in half the time if aluminum had been around in the seventeen-seventies." He added that the British still cannot properly pronounce "aluminum." "They put in an extra syllable, and it just ruins it," he said. The French pronunciation, he noted, "is even worse."

August 23rd, Ocho Rios, Jamaica: Vacationing here on the "Bauxite Riviera," Treasury Secretary O'Neill said that he felt "ten years younger" after a week of "just lying around on the clay beach, watching my grandkids extract silicate compounds using electrolytic processes. This is what life should be about."

January 20, 2002: Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill marked his first year in office by ordering the U.S. Mint to issue commemorative aluminum dollars. The coins will bear the likeness of Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829), the British chemist who first recognized the existence of "God's most precious metal," as Mr. O'Neill put it. The proposal faces opposition by some members of Congress, who feel that U.S. coins should honor Americans.

March 3rd headline, the *News:*
"HUMPHRY" DUMPTY: O'NEILL BACKS DOWN ON DOLLAR COIN WITH LIKENESS OF BRITISH SCIENTIST; COMPROMISE COINS WILL FEATURE FACE OF ALCOA FOUNDER GEORGE CLAPP.

April 23rd: Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill tonight ordered U.S. Customs to seize all incoming shipments of foreign-made aluminum products, saying that they posed a threat to American children. "Small children can swallow these and choke," he said. "This is unacceptable." Asked how children would swallow giant spools of industrially spun aluminum, he said he was "not willing to take that risk."

June 2nd: Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill today said that Congress should move "without delay" to create a Strategic Aluminum Reserve. He cited Russia's vigorous new aluminum-attack-submarine-building program as evidence for the need to start stockpiling aluminum "like, yesterday."

July 8th headline, *Barron's:*
ALCOA STOCK SPLITS 4-1.

July 15th: Declaring that "my work here in Washington is done," Paul O'Neill announced today that he would step down as U.S. Treasury Secretary. He said he planned to go fishing with his grandchildren, "in a good, sturdy aluminum boat." ♦

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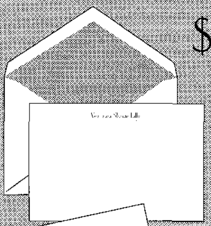

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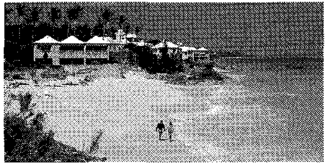

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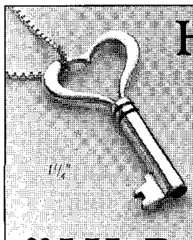

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CASTLE IN A BOX

Tract-housing developments for millionaires.

BY DAVID BROOKS

Not long ago, while sitting on a plush couch in the home theatre of a brand-new, six-million-dollar house with gorgeous views of the Pacific Ocean, I experienced an incongruous yet faintly familiar sensation. The movie "Twister" was playing on a hundred-inch-screen TV, and every time the tornado got anywhere near Helen Hunt I heard rumbling from surround-sound speakers that hung over the minibar and on the ceiling and walls. When the storm was right on top of her, a woofer built into the couch I was sitting on began to vibrate violently. It took me a minute or two to place the feeling: the coin-operated "magic fingers" one used to encounter in certain motels.

The house is part of a relatively new phenomenon in the American real-estate industry: the tract-mansion development. This particular development, called Oceanfront, is in Rancho Palos Verdes, which is about half an hour south of the Los Angeles airport. An underground hydrometer and a Rain Master drip-irrigation system water the grass and shrubs around each house so the owner won't have to worry about sprinklers getting his shoes wet when he comes home from work. If he has to get up in the middle of the night, motion detectors will turn on the lights for him and turn them off again as he makes his way back to bed, saving him from having to fumble with switches. The front door can be set for fingerprint or iris recognition, so he won't have to count himself among the unfortunates who dig around for their house keys when they come home. And if the doorbell rings while he's in his sauna (which is situated to provide perfect wintertime sunset views) the house's sound systems will automatically go mute, and, by clicking on the nearest computer screen or television, he can see who is at the front door. All these features (and many more) would already be in the house when he moved in, each one a pleasant little reminder of how far he has risen above the herd.

In the past five years, McMansions along these lines have been cropping up all across suburban America. The houses tend to be similar: the two-story "lawyer foyers" when you walk in; the four-car "garage mahals" jutting out front; the altarlike spas in the master baths, with those whirlpool tubs that look so suggestively sexy before you move in but seldom get used afterward.

The Nasdaq slump has done little to slow the spread of these developments. In California last year, the number of homes that sold for more than a million dollars rose by fifty-one per cent, proving to developers that there are still plenty of buyers out there with enough money and self-confidence to think that they can solve the problem of decorating the blank thirty-foot-high walls of a vaulted great room or a cathedral kitchen.

Of course, moguls have always built grandiose mansions, but during the last gilded age, and through most of America's history, they assumed that they should mimic the manners of their social superiors. In Newport, along Fifth Avenue, and in upper-class suburbs on the Main Line, the North Shore of Chicago, and elsewhere, they built faux stately homes as if they were the landed gentry; fortresses as if they were Renaissance princes; or hunting lodges as if their families had been riding to hounds for centuries. The idea was to leave behind the grubby world of commerce and establish one's family's ascent into the realm of gentility and ease. There would be cropped lawns for croquet, galleries for an art collection, and maybe a gentleman's farm. The house would be classical and permanent, a monument to the owner's great achievement. ("An estate is a little kingdom," Disraeli once observed. "Nothing could equal the egotism of a landed proprietor on a Sunday afternoon.") It had to be unique as well. No baron wanted to go to cotillions in the homes of his neighbors and discover that each of them had one of four floor plans.

These days, though, what could have higher status than commerce? Few families live in the same house for more than a couple of decades, and most people don't have time to think about planning and building a stately home. Many of the grandest moguls now prefer to write a check for a prefab palace. The homes at Oceanfront are "production homes," which means that they are built on spec, the way middle-class suburban subdivisions are. A new millionaire can walk through one of the models and purchase exactly what he sees, down to the furniture, the bath towels, and the silverware.

The Italian model has onyx floors and a conservatory. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

Hadi Makarechian is the chairman and C.E.O. of Capital Pacific Holdings, the company that is developing Oceanfront. Last summer, I visited him in his atriumlike office, in Newport Beach. The office is dominated by a wall of glass overlooking a man-made fishpond. Hadi told me that he conceived the development with the 24/7 workaholic rich in mind. "Nobody has the time to go through the brain damage of working with an architect and trying to figure out what you want," he said. "We are building a house almost the way a high-end designer would, like the Versaces or Armanis or Donna Karans. There is a little bit of fine-tuning at the end—you can change the color of your flooring. But basically everything else can be done for you." Capital Pacific Holdings hired Donna Karan's feng-shui adviser to add some final touches, such as a mirror over the main entrance of each house to ward off bad spirits, and an Asian harmony symbol on the sidewalk in front of the development's sales office.

Oceanfront will eventually consist of seventy-nine houses, with an average price tag of around five million dollars. So far, a dozen have been sold and eight more are under construction. The houses are designed and put up with little help from trained architects. Hadi has a building company, and he hires outside "designers," but they tend to have contempt for the custom-home industry. Production-home builders love to complain about self-indulgent architects, custom-home neighborhoods where each house clashes with the next, and clients who are naïve enough to think that they know something about how to design a house. Jeffrey Meyers, the principal of the Meyers Group, a company that tracks the real-estate industry, told me, "You take a guy who's an instant billionaire. He tries to find an architect, and suddenly he's the director, like he's making a movie: 'I want my master bedroom to be really big. And I want my bathroom here.' But he doesn't know if he wants an enclosed toilet or not! You stick an individual in the middle of the building process, and it usually gets all screwed up."

But if you bought a home at Oceanfront Hadi would take care of all the pesky decisions for you, handling everything from the financing to the nightstands. He is the one who decides which rooms should be huge and which should be humongous. He is the one who selects just the shade of onyx flooring that won't clash with the grand piano. He approves how far the lava-rock fire pit should be from the back-yard health spa and Jacuzzi. It was he who came up with the idea that the passageway from the garage should lead straight to the husband's dressing room, so that the master of the house can shower and change before presenting himself to the family. He even oversees such things as the placement of electrical switches. (Who would want to live in a house where you couldn't control your family-room DVD player from the light switch in the kitchen?)

The spread of big, boxlike houses across the land has even generated its own countermovement, led by a Minnesota architect named Sarah Su-

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sanka. Susanka grew up admiring Prairie School architecture and became alarmed when ugly starter castles started popping up in the Twin Cities area. "So many houses, so big with so little soul," she writes in a manifesto against these developments, "The Not So Big House." She says that big houses are designed "to impress rather than nurture," with their hard surfaces and vast, impersonal spaces. Her book is illustrated with photographs of smaller-scale houses that she and her colleagues designed. These houses are filled with cozy little spaces—an alcove on a landing, a reading nook off the bedroom—intended for quiet, contemplative pleasures. In her own house, she has created a meditation room in the attic. When you look at the places Susanka has built, you imagine mild, thoughtful people in comfortable clothes and stockinged feet, maybe carrying a book and a cup of herb tea. When you look at the McMansions that she crusades against, you imagine strenuously competitive people with loud voices, who like to cheer and taunt during indoor games of Ping-Pong, pool, or arena football.

Hadi Makarechian was born in Iran in 1948. His family owned the country's largest construction-and-development company. During the Cold War, when tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union were high, business was good. The family firm was hired to build missile silos and U.S. Air Force bases that were intended to serve as launching areas in case of a war. Like many young men in élite Iranian society, Hadi was sent abroad for college; he went to the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he earned a degree in civil engineering and met his wife, Barbara, who is from New York City. They moved to Iran and raised two boys. Hadi was moving up in the family business when the Ayatollah Khomeini came to power. He knew that the new regime was not going to be friendly to a family that had intimate connections both to the Shah and to the U.S. military, and, in fact, the family assets were confiscated. Hadi decided to move to Florida, where his in-laws lived.

"Everything we had over there—millions and millions and millions—was gone," Hadi told me. "I said, 'No problem. I'll just start from scratch.' "

He set up a building company, going around to property owners and persuading them to let him help them develop their land. He was surprised to find that beachfront owners were putting up apartment buildings that faced the ocean squarely. He showed them how to place their buildings on the diagonal and stepped back, so that every apartment had views in two directions and could be sold at oceanfront prices. Soon he started building his own projects, but after a few years he found the Florida summers intolerable, and he moved his family north, to Washington, D.C. He set up another company and built some more. He was fantastically successful, but his wife objected to the long hours he was working, so, at the age of thirty-nine, he retired. "I had promised my wife that as soon as the kids got to be ten years old I would spend more time with them. Then I said, 'As soon as they get to fourteen, I'll spend the time with them.' I kept making the promise but never could find the time, so finally I sold my business and came to California. That way, I could stay away from the brokers."

Retirement lasted three months. Hadi bought a bankrupt California development company and began building again. Ten years later, his company, under the name Capital Pacific Holdings, has built thousands of houses across the Southwest. He and his backers are now putting a billion dollars into a number of choice coastal properties in Southern California, including a resort hotel in Orange County, a new downtown for Huntington Beach, and tract-palace communities up and down the coast, with names like Ritz Pointe and Mulholland Estates and, of course, Oceanfront.

Hadi is a short, sleek man, who favors dark, conservative suits and square-toed shoes and speaks softly. There are no rough edges to him, and not much in the way of wasted effort. Yet, if Hadi is like a Porsche, his son Paul is an F-18. Paul, who is twenty-six and a senior vice-president at Capital Pacific Holdings, sauntered into Hadi's office one day, wearing a pistachio-green shirt and a matching tie. Hadi works from seven in the morning until nine at night, but Paul works from 5 A.M. until midnight. Everybody else is deferential toward Hadi, but

Paul interrupts him in conversation, cutting him off and contradicting him freely. After a few minutes with Paul, Hadi was left asking a few hesitant questions, while his son held forth confidently about changes in the real-estate market.

One afternoon, we drove down the Pacific Coast Highway in Hadi's black Range Rover, along the thin strip of coast that is the domain of high-end real estate. For Hadi, location decisions are easy: he builds only on oceanfront. "Everybody from the road to the East Coast is inland," he said as we drove along. "Everybody who has made it, they all want to come to the coast." On occasion, Hadi has rented a helicopter and gone up and down the coast looking for undeveloped lots. He bought the hundred and thirty-two acres that became Oceanfront from a Japanese group, for twenty million dollars, in 1997. He spent fifteen or twenty million more grading the land with bulldozers while he figured out what sort of houses to build on it.

"I did research into everybody who had purchased houses around here," he said. "I saw homes that were, like, three thousand square feet, thirty-four years old. My God! They sold for two million! I knew I could get at least twice that much for new homes."

To decide which films to have running on the DVD players when clients tour his model homes, Hadi asked his peers what their favorite movies were. At Oceanfront, "Twister" plays in a model with a home theatre; in one of the more casual models, a video of a James Taylor concert plays on the DVD in the family room; and in a more formal model "The Three Tenors" plays. All the televisions and stereos in the model homes are turned on during business hours, and, because there is a TV in almost every room, as you walk through a house you might hear a couple of different movies, Elton John, and Bach all at the same time.

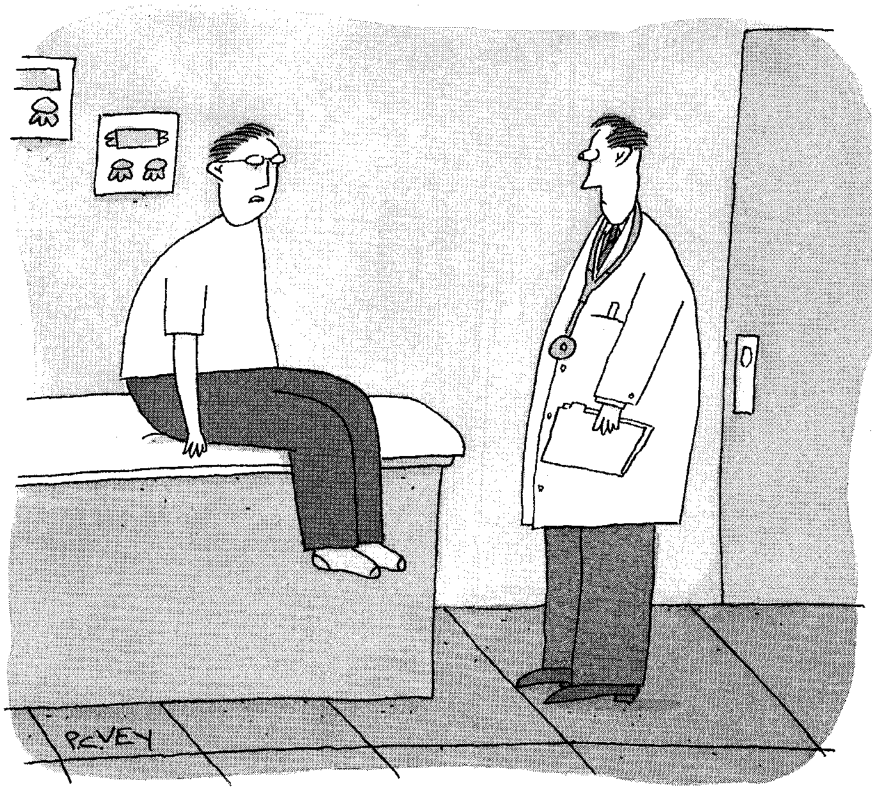
Jeffrey Meyers confirmed Hadi's suspicion that the new élite has no aspirations to become a leisure class. The aristocratic ideal—languid afternoons, croquet on the lawn, an elevated world detached from commerce—seems to have little appeal. "The technology rich want it now, and they want it fast," Meyers told me, and they often pay cash for their houses.

After Hadi decides what type of development he wants to build, he must get zoning approval. When he was planning Oceanfront, the neighbors fought the project vociferously. The development is on a slope that leads down to cliffs overlooking the Pacific. Up the slope there are normal-sized houses, with basketball hoops and trash cans outside. Between them and the coastline is Palos Verdes Drive West. On the other side of the road is Oceanfront. Hadi doesn't talk much about zoning restrictions, because in his account he is a free agent, in total control of his project. But when the city of Rancho Palos Verdes considered the plans for Oceanfront it demanded that the town's stringent height restrictions be obeyed, so that ocean views from the road and from the houses up the hill would not be obstructed. That means that there are no trees or roofs at Oceanfront that measure more than sixteen feet high, and that the walls that mark the entrance to the development (it is called the "entry statement") can't be more than forty-eight inches high. The people who are buying homes in Oceanfront are miffed about the small entry statement.

To conform to the zoning regulations, Hadi and his team inverted the typical McMansion design. Usually, you walk into a huge atrium with a double-height ceiling soaring above you. Here you walk in and see a pair of sweeping staircases going down, and the grand empty space—obligatory in all McMansions—is below you. The homes are built into the hillside, so that the top floor has the great ocean views and the lower floor opens up onto the back yard.

As Oceanfront employees kept explaining to me, the most important spot in any McMansion is the area just inside the front door, where you achieve what Hadi calls "impact on entry." That's where buyers take their first look, and where guests will get their first impression of the house.

Hadi takes that spot and tries to turn it into an IMAX experience. When you step into an Oceanfront house, the first thing you see is a wall of glass and the Pacific Ocean beyond. In some of the models, if you look down the stairs you see more windows and, through them, a swimming pool. As Hadi says, "You see water up and water down." Only thirty of the homes in Oceanfront will have a front-row view of the ocean, however; the forty-nine others will be set behind



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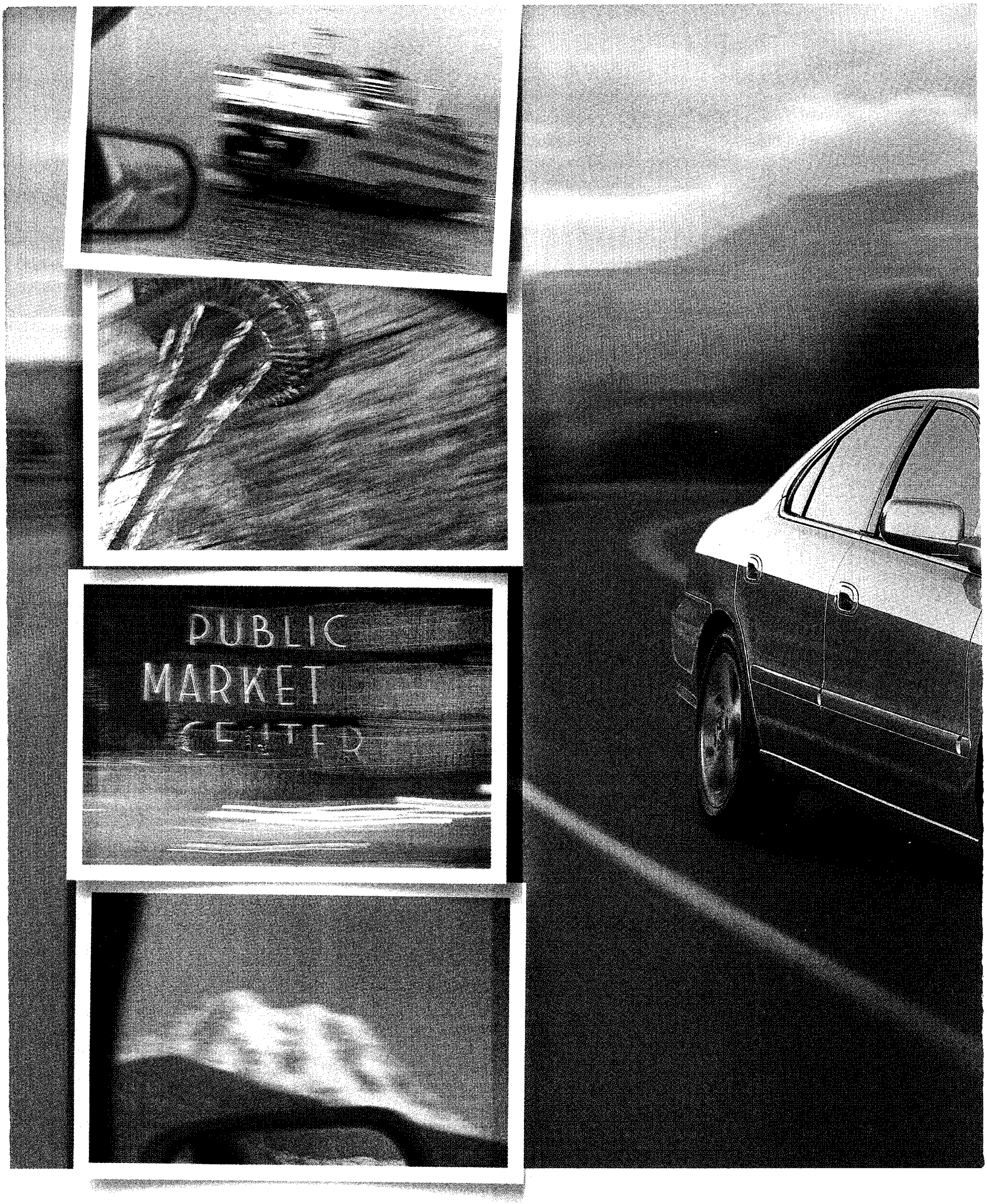

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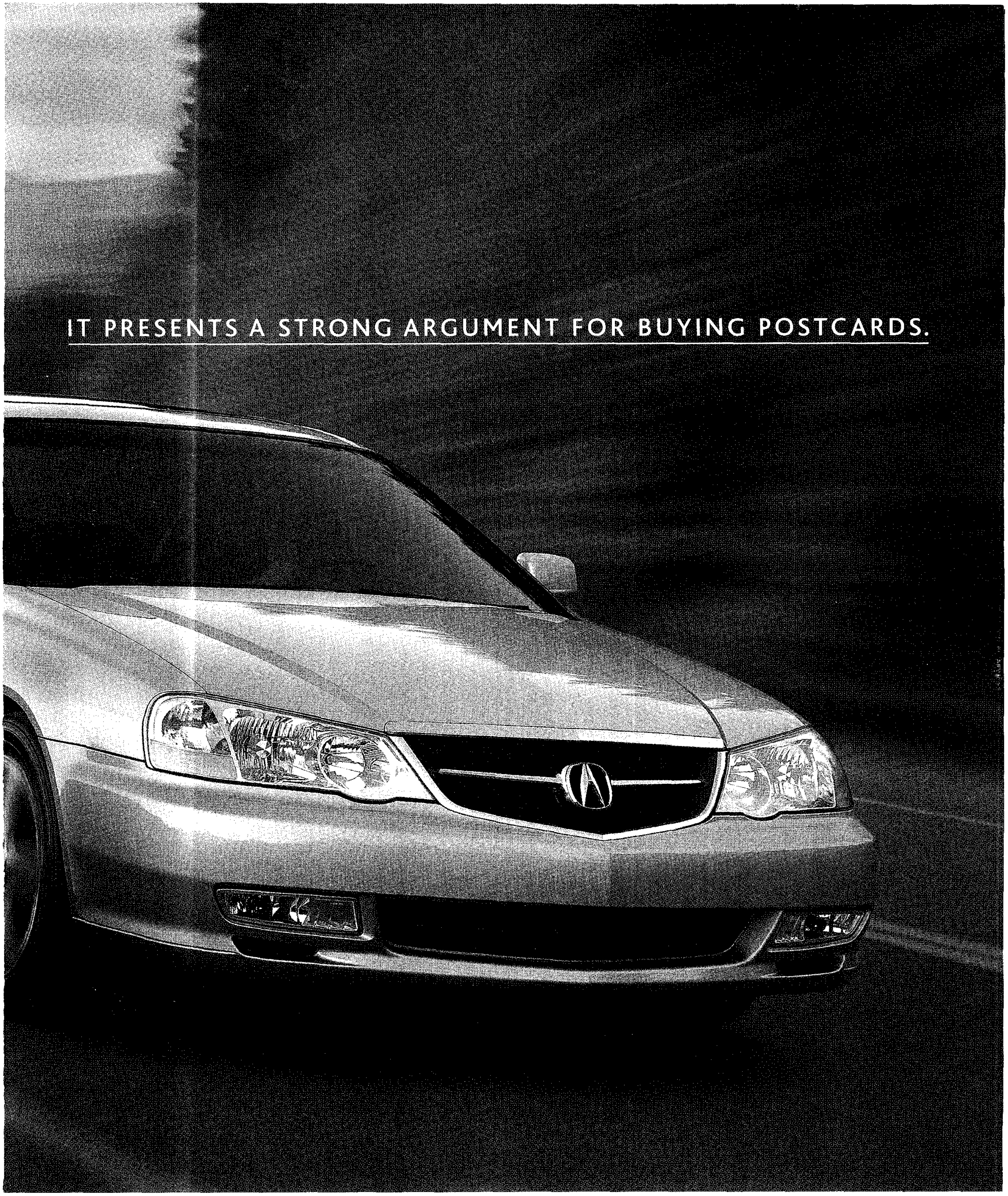
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"Whoops! I didn't mean to interrupt anything."

• •

other homes. Hadi has dealt with this indignity by placing the windows of the less optimally situated houses in such a way that the rooflines of the houses in front of them can't be seen. So, even if there is a neighbor between you and the Pacific, from the foyer you have what Hadi calls a "view corridor," and you still see only ocean and pool.

When Hadi and his designers talk about Oceanfront, they talk about visual qualities first—things like how the breakfast room has been arranged to allow a view down a long avenue of moldings to the master-bedroom foyer, at the other end of the house. Then they talk about all the cool gizmos, such as ten phone lines, speakers inside the rocks in the garden, an electronic system that allows you to adjust all the lights in the house to preset "scenes"—romance, sunset, and so on. And only then do they get around to talking about actual living arrangements.

The builders decide which rooms are important on the basis of a simple credo, which one of Hadi's assistants passed on to me: "Take care of the decision-maker." In Hadi's world, that means the man of the house. Traditionally, women are thought to make the crucial decisions about home purchases and home design. But Oceanfront was built by successful men, and, apparently, it caters to them as well. Masculine colors dominate the interiors, as do stone floors, rock walls, and quarrylike bathtubs. The front doors are often thick, dark, and studded with steel, as if they had been designed to hold off a peasant revolt. Some of the stair railings and wall moldings are installed a little lower than usual, so the owner can feel taller as he strides down to the bedroom.

For the exteriors of the Oceanfront houses, Hadi worked with a man named Robert Coyle, who is part of a firm called Iverson Associates. Coyle is a designer, but he doesn't have an architecture degree. He gave the exteriors a classic Santa Barbara look: red tile roofs and Spanish tones and shapes. Hadi wasn't quite satisfied with Coyle's designs, however. The lines were too clean, and there weren't enough decorative touches. "There's a high degree of perceived value for money in architectural detail," Tim Hamilton, who oversees sales at Oceanfront, told me. "The bigger and chunkier, the greater the perception of value." So Hadi brought in a British-born "thematic designer" named James Adams to add frills and doodads to each house. Adams is one of the world's leading "themists." Builders hire him to take normal buildings and turn them into something closer to theme parks. In 1997, Adams designed the new Palace Tower at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, complete with blazing-white friezes, scowling military busts, and swirling wall-to-wall carpeting. In Singapore, he designed a building called Parkview Square to look like a giant, eye-popping Art Deco radio console. He is helping turn the Battersea Power Station, in London, into a lush shopping-and-entertainment complex that will look like a royal palace in the lost world of Atlantis.

I went to see Adams in his office, just off the ocean in Newport Beach. He greeted me in flip-flops, cutoff jeans, and an unbuttoned denim shirt. He is in his early fifties, has shoulder-length blond hair, and wears a surfer necklace. Surfboards lie across the rafters in his studio. Adams lives a beach bum's fantasy life, drawing in the morning and surfing with his son in the afternoon, and the only unexpected note is his English accent, which he hasn't lost, even though he has lived in Hawaii and California for more than thirty years.

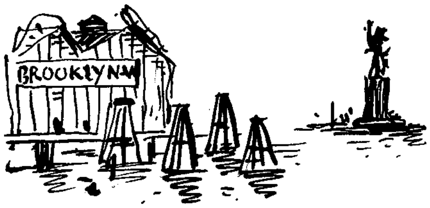
Adams considers himself a "design chameleon," who can work in any style. For Oceanfront, he was instructed, as he put it, "to individualize the houses and turn up the volume on the styles." He took an archway over the courtyard of one of the houses and gave it a wavy shape, so that, according to the house's original designer at Iverson, it looks like a giant eyebrow. (The Iverson people are not thrilled to see their "classic" designs embellished with Adams's touches.) He dressed up the chimneys so that they look like Moorish birdhouses. He added imitation stone moldings and, to the windows, Spanish-style trim, plaster and metal grilles, or slatted shutters. "If they spend more money, they want more detail," Adams said.

There are four basic model homes at Oceanfront. The most formal is done in what Hadi calls the Italian style, and, indeed, it looks like the sort of palace where Silvio Berlusconi might hold a dinner during a G-7 meeting. It has onyx floors, domed ceilings, brass fixtures, and, in the conservatory, formal columns. Every room is so big that it has its own living-room area. Even the living room has a separate living-room area. There are large urns inside what can only be described as the house's main lobby, along with gigantic chairs and trees.

The size has some drawbacks. It's thirty-eight steps from the bed of the master bedroom to the bathroom sink, and you have to make seven turns along the way. But, once you're in the bathroom, it is, as the Michelin people would say, worth the detour. "You only get this kind of bathroom in the finest hotels in Las Vegas," Hadi told me proudly. There are two sink areas, barely within shouting distance of one another. There are benches and a huge stone tub. There are two enclosed toilet chambers, so far apart that a husband and wife could use the facilities at the same time without either knowing the other was home. Even the glass shower stalls are big; they can fit four people, perhaps six, in case the owner wants to rinse off with his entourage.

My favorite house is the second model, the French Country. This is a casual castle, with broad floor planks and comfy upholstered furniture. It looks like the sort of place Rousseau would have retired to if he had been a movie producer. The lower level has stone floors and a sort of indoor piazza, and the kitchen walls are made of big rocks that were flown in from Italy. But there is a limit to the rusticity; in the kitchen I counted eleven light switches and twenty electrical outlets.

The third house is the New York Loft model. There's something perverse about taking an enormous house with ocean views in Southern California and designing it to replicate an artist's loft on lower Broadway, but Hadi has done just that. You know you're in the artsy model because there's a book of Stieglitz photographs in the front hallway. There's an artist's studio in this house, with a drafting table and posable wooden figures. "At the high end, you have to picture in your mind a very arty person, very wealthy," Hadi said. " 'I can afford to pay five or six million for my house. What sort of colors do I go for?' " Black, it seems: the décor in this house is black, Asian, and minimalist. The bed is close to the ground, like the beds in Japanese hotels. The toilets are low and sleek. In fact, almost everything in the house is low, because, apparently, artistic people like to squat a lot.



One day, I walked through the fourth model, the Ralph Lauren house, with a customer whom I'll call Andrew. At more than seven thousand square feet, it's slightly smaller than the Italian model, although, like the Italian, it has seven bathrooms. Hadi has managed to preserve the feel of an English men's club, even though he has reversed all the conventional proportions: the rooms having to do with culture—the library and the music room—are small, and the rooms having to do with personal comfort, like the kitchen and the walk-in closets, are big.

Andrew had just bought this model, with a few minor alterations, for his family, and the house was now under construction. Andrew is a large, genial man in his fifties, who was dressed that day in a golf shirt, rumpled casual pants, and tasselled loafers. He grew up in Westchester County, one of four children raised by a single mother. By the age of thirteen, he was paying his way through private school by caddying at an exclusive local country club, and he won a caddy scholarship to college. He joined the Air Force during the Vietnam years, and during a leave he found himself caddying for the president of a New York computer-services company, who offered him a job.

The secret of the high-tech gilded age is that many of the people who have become millionaires in the computer business have done it slowly, over decades. Andrew has worked in sales for his networking company for more than fifteen years, and he now oversees the global sales force, working thirteen-hour days and travelling abroad eighteen times a year. When Andrew and his wife are

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not working, their life revolves around sports and their three grown children.

We stood in the foyer of the Ralph Lauren model, and Andrew looked out toward the ocean and the pool. "From the moment I walked in the door, there was no question it was something I loved," he said. "I'm not an ocean guy. I'm a golf guy. I've never set foot in that ocean. But certainly having that ocean view was a selling point."

Andrew heard about Oceanfront from his wife's hairdresser, who had visited the development during an open house. (He and his wife now live in the nearby town of El Segundo.) "We loved the butler's pantry," he said, describing his first visit. "And an elevator in the house—it's something you don't expect, but it's a nice feature." Andrew chose to keep almost all the restaurant-quality appliances that are in the model kitchen, even though he and his wife almost never cook.

Andrew said they knew that they had to have the house when they walked down the stairs and saw the wet bar (Hadi values it at a hundred thousand dollars), the pool table, and the family area. "The family room is just awesome to us," he said. "The bar with two televisions behind it! Our kids are sports fanatics, so we pictured, during football season and basketball season, having multiple events on while we're together as a family." For a while, Andrew was thinking of installing a putting green in the back yard, near the pool. "That would give another opportunity to compete with the kids without having to try to outdrive them," he said.

When I toured the house with Andrew, he mentioned almost every detail that Hadi had predicted would appeal to buyers. And Andrew realizes that he would never have thought of such details himself. "The features they built in create a 'This is us'-type approach," he said. "We didn't have to use our imagination and kill ourselves trying to figure out how to do it." With all the options he has selected, Andrew still doesn't know exactly how much his house is going to cost.

Hadi's four models are marketed to different sorts of millionaires, but they are all designed for people who use their homes for networking galas. In the French Country model, I counted eleven sofas and ninety-five chairs. Hadi can quickly reel off how many party guests each house can hold—between two and three hundred in the smaller models and between three and four hundred in the bigger ones.

The strangest part of the houses is the kids' quarters. Horace Bushnell once wrote that "the home, having a domestic spirit of grace dwelling in it, should become the church of childhood." Bushnell would not have approved of the homes at Oceanfront. If you have kids who, every morning, forget where they left their sneakers, you'd spend two hours a day searching under the ninety-five chairs. If you have kids who sometimes fall down, you'd have to equip them with bike helmets indoors because of all the stone flooring and rock walls. If you have kids who sometimes have nightmares that wake them up, you'd have to develop a trekker's mentality (in one house, it took me almost two minutes to walk from the master bedroom to the nearest kid's room, downstairs).

With Oceanfront, Hadi is not only making money but helping to construct a new plutocratic life style. If you're one of his customers, it's cool to be at the office fifteen hours a day. Work is more thrilling than anything you could be doing in the kitchen or on the grounds. You want a house commensurate with your accomplishment, but you don't want a house that's going to waste your time, either.

At 11:45 P.M., you want to be able to pull up in your gold Lexus and slide through your entry gate and into one of the bays in your six-car garage. You're bone tired but pleased, once again, by your powers of endurance. Your employees left work hours ago and your kids are snug in their beds. The locks click crisply as you walk into your house, and the motion sensors turn on the lights over the wet bar as you come in to get a beer. You pause to look out at the ocean through the wall of windows. Behind you, in all the other homes inland, are millions of sleeping citizens. But you've got the Pacific to yourself, and this vast luxury box of a house, because in the race of life you have made it to the front row. ♦

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE TREE OF ME

DNA testing is revolutionizing the field of genealogy. Are we ready for what we might find?

BY JOHN SEABROOK

Why is it that in the United States, the first country in the world to overthrow the accident of birth, people are so fascinated with their ancestors? According to a recent Maritz poll, a hundred and twenty million Americans are interested in family history. The National Genealogical Society estimates that family history is now the second most popular hobby in the United States, after gardening. Genealogy is also the second most searched-for subject on the Web. (Porn, of course, is No. 1.) FamilySearch.com, a database maintained by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, has had more than five billion hits since it was launched, less than two years ago. Many of the Web-based family-history sites combine rich genealogical resources with naked hucksterism. At www.familyheritageshop.com, for example, you can get a detailed history of your surname, but only if you buy it on a piece of parchment, such as the "Family Name History Masterpiece Scroll," for nineteen dollars and ninety-five cents. As the family Web site gradually takes the place of the family Bible as the standard repository of family history, the controlling structure for the family seems to be evolving from a tree into something more like a root system, hairy with adoptive parents, two-mommy families, sperm-bank daddies, and other kinds of family appendages that don't fit onto trunks and branches.

Genealogy serves two often incompatible human impulses: the desire for self-knowledge and the desire for status. On the one hand, genealogists ask the most profound questions we can ask about ourselves—Where did we come from? and Where are we going? On the other hand, genealogy is the oldest form of social climbing in the world. Long before the ancient Hebrews put their genealogies in writing, in order to prove they were the "chosen people," humans have claimed status and inherited privilege by establishing the superiority of their forebears. The longevity of the British aristocracy, in which a relative few enjoy the majority of the property and wealth, is due in part to the persistent belief that entitlement is inherited "in the blood."

Our Founding Fathers abolished the hereditary aristocracy, but in its place we have an extraordinary variety of hereditary societies. There are early-settler societies, Colonial societies (both Revolutionary and Tory), religious societies, and ethnic societies—everything from the National Society of Daughters of the Barons of Runnemede ("for women of lineal descent from one or more of the barons who served as sureties of the Magna Carta in 1215") to the Society of the Descendants of Washington's Army at Valley Forge. In New York, the headquarters of many of the city's hereditary societies are at the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, a stately Italianate building on East Fifty-eighth Street, where the quaint practices of New Yorkers long dead are preserved. At meetings of the Holland Society of New York (for male descendants of residents of New Netherland before 1675), a stuffed-beaver mascot, symbol of the fur trade, is carried around the room by a color guard while one of the guardsmen proclaims, "Gentlemen, the Beaver!"

Recently, new ways of identifying ancestors have been developed using DNA analysis. In addition to containing a complete set of instructions for the creation and maintenance of life, DNA is a vast new archive of human history, one that can be used both for answering questions about one's own ancestors and for shedding light on the ancestry of the human species. In our DNA is a history of genetic heritage which includes not only our human ancestors but also our chimpanzee ancestors, our fish ancestors, and our protozoan ancestors, going all the way back to LUCA (an acronym for "last universal common ancestor")—a thermophilic bacterium that lived some four billion years ago, whose DNA all living things share.

But, if DNA can help us discover who we are, it can also tell us who we aren't. If the only purpose of genealogy were biological ancestry, then the surname should follow the mother's line, because, as any genealogist will tell you, the father is only ever the presumptive parent, whereas the mother is almost always the genetic one. The rate of false paternity in the United States is estimated to be between two and five per cent—not large, but over ten generations the likelihood that a bloodline suffers what geneticists refer to as a "non-paternity event" could approach fifty per cent. This means that many of the fancy pedigrees cherished by great families may not, biologically speaking, be accurate. In the age of DNA, the Daughters of the Barons of Runnemede may end up belonging to the Daughters of the Paleozoic Invertebrates instead.

I have been a casual family historian for quite a while, but I was not a serious researcher into my own genealogy until a couple of years ago, when I became a father, an ancestor in my own right—no longer a tender young shoot on the family tree but a stouter limb farther back. I don't exactly know why I am so interested in my ancestors. It's not as if I were particularly intimate with my parents, siblings, and cousins. We are close in an unspoken way, but there's a lot about them that I don't know, and that they don't know about me, and most of us seem to be reasonably content with this arrangement. But the lure of ancestors is not like the desire for intimacy with relatives. Ancestors are mostly dead, and while this is the main problem with them—they rarely left behind adequate records of their thinking at crucial junctures in their lives—it is also what makes obsessing about them acceptable. They are less likely to embar-

"INVOCATION" (1992), PRIVATE COLLECTION, NYC

Genealogy, the oldest form of social climbing, has become a way to find the ancestors we feel we deserve. Photograph by Adam Fuss.

rass you, or to show up and stay with you.

Like many Americans, I first became interested in my "crossing ancestors"—the forebears who made the passage from the Old World to this one. Almost every family has a crossing story of some kind to tell: it's the story of the way we became Americans. In African-American family history, the crossing is a nightmare of oppression, and for many other families it is a story of hardship and persecution. But it is also a source of pride, because it's the start of a kind of spiritual pedigree. Crossing stories are rarely written down. They usually exist in the oral legends that families tell about how they got here, in which truth often yields to a good story and an illustrious forebear.

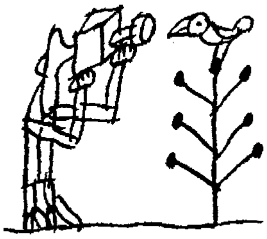
My paternal crossing ancestor—the one who brought my branch of the Seabrooks to these shores—was easier to trace than my maternal ancestor (a Toomey), because recordkeeping favors the male line. He was my great-great-grandfather Samuel Seabrook. Samuel came with his family from England sometime between 1855 and 1860, far too late to qualify our family for any of the hereditary societies. My father seems to feel that our family didn't cross soon enough, and for many years he has hoped to prove a connection between our line and the storied South Carolina Seabrooks. Their crossing ancestor, Captain Robert Seabrook, came around 1675, and the family owned several large plantations on the sea islands of Edisto, Johns, and Seabrook, off the Carolina coast, before its fortunes were wrecked by the Civil War. According to the story my father heard from his father, a son of the Carolina Seabrooks could have been sent back to England, to be educated at Cambridge University, where he became an abolitionist. His slave-owning family disowned him, and so he settled in the nearby county of Suffolk, where Samuel's family came from.

Virtually everything I know about my Seabrook ancestors is from a genealogy that my grandfather commissioned from a professional genealogist in London, and which he paid the American Historical Company to include in a sixty-five-volume tome called "Colonial and Revolutionary Lineages of America," published in 1954. My grandfather was a self-made man, and, like many other Americans of undistinguished origin who achieve some eminence in the world, at a certain point in his life he found himself wanting the ancestors he deserved. Even though our Seabrook lineage is neither Colonial nor Revolutionary, the American Historical Company counted it among its élite, who are, according to the volumes' foreword, "those who sound their belief in the principles upon which our country was founded, and their adherence to the lofty aims and ideals that were written into the early documents of our government." We all believe that men are created equal, goes the logic here, but let's not forget that some of us believed it first.

Shortly after my son was born, in 1998, I began to try to sort out what about this family history was fact and what was fiction. The following details seemed accurate. Samuel was born in England in 1815. His father was the Reverend Thomas Seabrook, who was the curate of a church in Denston, a village in Suffolk, about twenty miles east of Cambridge. Thomas's father, a farmer named John, was born in the same area, in 1746, and died there in 1801; John's father, Richard, also came from there, although there was no record of his birth. Beyond Richard, nothing, although my grandfather had somehow convinced the editor that he should include a legend about an earlier ancestor who happened to share my grandfather's name:

> According to tradition, in the time of Charles II there resided in Wood Ditton, now a part of Newmarket in Suffolk, Charles Seabrook, a doctor. On an occasion when the king was traveling nearby his coach overturned, and the monarch suffered a broken arm and shoulder blade. Dr. Seabrook was summoned, and did his work so well that he was brought back to London where he was made Chief Surgeon to the King.

I do not know why Samuel came to America. All I know is that Samuel's first wife, Clara Peters, had died, and he and his second wife, Fanny Peaters, were married in 1855, in London, where, according to the marriage certificate, Samuel was working as a "warehouseman." Sometime in the next five years, they emigrated, with two of his children from the first marriage and one of their own. On arriving in New York, they found their way up the Hudson River and settled in Rhinebeck. Here, according to family legend, Samuel worked as a caretaker for Horace Greeley, the famous editor of the New York *Tribune*. This seems highly unlikely, since Greeley's farm was in Chappaqua, eighty-five miles downstate from Rhinebeck, but I have always liked the detail. On East Nineteenth Street in New York, which was the site of Greeley's residence when he was in town and where, a hundred and thirty years later, I lived on first moving to the city, I used to walk along the street imagining different scenarios in which Greeley and my great-great-grandfather might have met.



At some point in the eighteen-sixties, Samuel went down to the far southwestern corner of New Jersey, to a part of the state so rural and untravelled that even today hardly anyone knows it's there, and he settled among the truck farmers and muskrat trappers near the Cohansey River. Why here, of all places, I have always wanted to know. Whatever the reason, it is where my family has lived ever since, and it's where I grew up. Samuel died not long after he arrived, in January of 1871, and was buried in what is known as a "stranger's grave," at the back of the Presbyterian church in the village of Upper Deerfield. A brook running behind the graveyard has overflowed many times since Samuel was placed in it, and whatever stone marked the grave has long since been washed away.

One hot afternoon last summer, I went into the Irma and Paul Milstein Division of U.S. History, Local History, and Genealogy, in the New York Public Library. The Milstein Division is in a narrow, high-ceilinged room that used to house the science-and-technology collection, and the terra-cotta tiles there felt cool on the stifling day. My purpose was to search the census records and see if I could find some mention of Samuel's existence. The index for the 1860 census is on the open shelves, and I found the listings for Dutchess County, where Rhinebeck is situated. I could find no Seabrook, but there was a Samuel "Seabrood." The index gave a number, nine hundred and thirty-four, which corresponded to the page on which Seabrood's entry could be found.

The actual census records are on microfilm, stored in large metal filing cabinets in Room 119, next to the main genealogy room. The tables are filled with microfilm readers. The cowl-like, vaguely ecclesiastical shape of the machines, the users' supplicant posture, and the dim light make research in Room 119 feel a little like prayer. As I scanned the names of the dead, the spooled microfilm whirring, the realization that my life, too, will soon end washed over me. This was not the pleasant sensation of melancholy which comes from wandering around in cemeteries, where grass and old worn stones offer a kind of sensual comfort. This was a complete disaster: everyone was gone.

It was hard to read the faded numbers at the tops of the pages, but after some hunting around I found page 934, and there was Samuel Seabrook—it was definitely a "k" and not a "d"—along with a wife and a daughter and two male children, living in Dutchess County, New York, on April 21, 1860, the day the census-taker came to visit. The age was right, forty-five, and the country of origin, England, and place of dwelling, Rhinebeck, all matched the information I already had. Under "Occupation" there was a word that looked like "herdsman," or maybe "handyman." This discovery was unexpectedly thrilling, and I made a sound, a sound I have since heard others make in Room 119: a sort of exultant grunt that arises spontaneously when you "get" an ancestor. It was like finding something that has been lost for a long time—a kind of redemption.

"Water, Al—six to eight glasses."

• •

That was a promising beginning, but after a lot more searching in libraries and archives I didn't learn anything new. The genealogist my grandfather had hired seemed to have found what could be found in the records, and the more tantalizing but undocumented material—the doctor from Wood Ditton, the employment with Greeley—I could neither prove nor disprove. If only there were another way to trace ancestry, a method that didn't rely on the vagaries of records and on the whims of forebears who invented or destroyed documents in order to make themselves more impressive to their descendants. In the hope of finding one, I began to surf the new DNA-based genealogical sites on the Web.

I found a number of services offering DNA-fingerprint tests, mostly for the purpose of proving paternity. In this procedure, lab technicians examine a representative number of sites spread throughout the chromosomes in the human genome. Humans have twenty-three pairs of chromosomes—tightly coiled double-helix ladders of information inside the nucleus of almost all human cells—one set each from the mother and the father. Chromosomes are sequences of chemical compounds, or "bases"—adenine, cytosine, guanine, and thymine, designated by the letters A, C, G, and T—and by recording these sequences scientists can derive a unique genetic fingerprint for every individual on earth.

For years, a suspicious father's only recourse was to make jokes about the milkman; now he can log on to www.genetree.com and send away for the GeneSwab™ Specimen Collection Kit, which includes DNA swabs in three pastel colors, and promises an answer in seven to ten business days. (Two hundred and ninety dollars for the first test; a hundred and twenty-five dollars for each additional child.) Gene Tree also offers a complete line of products to test your brothers and sisters and your grand-

"Serving three sentences concurrently gives one a real sense of accomplishment."

• •

parents, as well as SecureGene™ DNA Banking, which archives your DNA. There's even ToothFairy DNAPassport™ for storing the kids' DNA.

However, while DNA fingerprinting can establish a pattern of genetic inheritance between people who are separated by one generation, it doesn't work if you're trying to locate a characteristic genetic signature in distant relatives, or among putative family members who lived hundreds, or even thousands, of years apart. This is because during the formation of sperm in men and eggs in women, the paired chromosomes in the nucleus exchange DNA randomly, a process known as recombination. Shuffling the deck like this contributes to a varied gene pool, but it also makes DNA fingerprints very difficult to trace over many generations.

There is one chromosome, the Y, carried only by men, that does not undergo recombination and remains essentially unchanged, except by rare mutations, as it is passed down through the male line. Since Y chromosomes and surnames are both handed down through the male line in Western culture, genealogists have the opportunity to match the record in our genes with the written records, and to use the former to bridge gaps and dead ends in the latter. In 1997, for example, an ingenious amateur genealogist named Dr. Eugene A. Foster realized that he could use a Y-chromosome test to help settle a genealogical controversy—whether Thomas Jefferson really did father a child with his slave Sally Hemings—that had kept a cottage industry of historians busy for more than a century. As Foster reported in *Nature* in 1998, tests comparing the Y chromosome of male descendants of Sally Hemings with the Y chromosome of proven descendants of Jefferson showed that there was a strong probability that Hemings's youngest son, Eston, was a Jefferson. (However, the Monticello Association, which oversees the graveyard for lineal descendants of Thomas Jefferson, still won't let any of the Hemings descendants be buried there, partly on the ground that the common ancestor could have been a different Jefferson.)

The Y has also been used to prove ancient tribal affiliations. According to the Old Testament, the descendants of Aaron, the older brother of Moses, are part of the priestly tribe of Jews known as the Cohanim (*cohan* means priest in Hebrew). The priesthood could pass only from father to son, and for the last three thousand years or so certain Jewish men have been telling their sons that they are Cohanim. Michael Hammer, a geneticist at the University of Arizona, sampled about three hundred Jewish men, and, as he and his collaborators reported in a 1997 paper, "Y Chromosomes of the Jewish Priests," published in *Nature*, more than fifty per cent of the men whose fathers had told them they were Cohanim shared a similar signature on their Y chromosomes, while only ten per cent of the non-Cohanim had that signature. Another study used the Y as a kind of molecular clock to approximate how far back the common ancestor of all these Cohanim lived, calculating that the man was alive between twenty-one hundred and thirty-two hundred and fifty years ago, which is consistent with the dates given for Moses and Aaron in the Old Testament. At www.FamilyTreeDNA.com, Hammer's Cohanim test is available to anyone who would like to find out if he has the priestly gene.

Perhaps the most dramatic example so far of the potential of Y-chromosome-based family history was demonstrated last spring by Bryan Sykes, who is a professor of human genetics at Oxford University, and a colleague, Catherine Irven. Sykes and Irven obtained DNA from forty-eight male Sykeses, who were not, as far as the respondents knew, related either to Dr. Sykes or to each other. By studying the men's Y chromosomes, Sykes discovered, to his astonishment, that there was a distinctive Sykes-family signature on the Y chromosomes of twenty-one of the forty-eight men tested. Four other Sykeses were only one mutation away from those twenty-one. In a paper on the study, published in *The American Journal of Human Genetics* in April, 2000, Sykes reasoned that since the DNA of the remaining Sykeses was not at all similar, there was probably one original founder of the surviving Sykes line, and that the unrelated Sykeses must be the results of a steady accumulation of non-paternity events or adoptions. Sykes is offering a commercial version of that test, called Y-Line, on a Web site, www.oxfordancestors.com, where the motto is "We put the gene in genealogy."

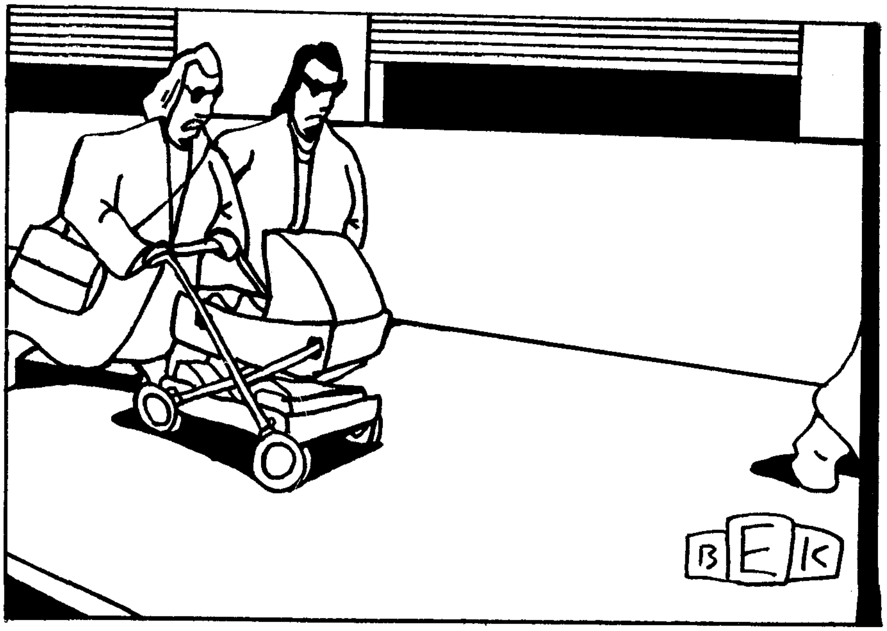
It occurred to me that the Y-chromosome test could answer my father's question of whether our Seabrooks are related to the South Carolina Seabrooks. In order for it to work, I would need to find a patrilineal descendant of Captain Robert Seabrook, persuade him to give me his DNA, and compare his Y chromosome with mine. After logging a number of hours on the Web, I found, at one of the thousands of surname-based chat rooms—www.genforum.com/seabrook—the E-mail address of Jeffrey Scott Seabrook, a resident of Argyle, Texas, who has a well-documented paper trail leading to the South Carolina Seabrooks and all the way back to Captain Robert, Jeffrey's great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather. I sent Jeffrey an E-mail, and he sent me his cell, work, and home-phone numbers. I reached him in his car and explained that I needed a little more of his information—his DNA. Not a problem, Jeffrey said. "I used to work for a company that helped develop DNA-testing kits," he said. "So I know what this DNA stuff is about."

I looked for some other male Seabrooks to sample. According to a database of telephone directories on www.ancestry.com, there are eight hundred and thirty Seabrooks listed in the United States. Seabrook is not so rare a surname as Crapper (twenty-nine listings) or Lump (sixty-three), but it is not so common as Bundy (3,963) or Reed (91,414) or Adams (142,720). At any rate, it is uncommon enough that whenever I meet another Seabrook we are quick to exchange family histories, to see if our respective branches might be connected by a common ancestor. The Internet has made these random encounters much more likely, and in recent years I have received E-mails from Seabrooks around the world, each trying to find his place in the larger family tree, if indeed one exists. The most active of these family E-storians are Australian Seabrooks, followed closely by Canadians, then by Americans, and finally by British Seabrooks. The general rule seems to be that the farther the bearers of a name get from its motherland the more interested in their roots they become.

It wasn't easy to find Seabrooks around New York who were willing to give me their DNA. First of all, many of the Seabrooks living in New York City are black. This is a cultural legacy of slavery, and specifically of the South Carolina Seabrooks, who at the height of their fortunes owned more than a thousand slaves, some of whom took the name Seabrook on being freed. Larry Seabrook is a former state senator whose district was in the Bronx and part of Westchester. Norman Seabrook is the head of the city correction officers' union ("New York's Boldest"). It is remotely possible that these Seabrooks share some of my DNA, but it seemed insensitive to ask them to take the test in order to find out. (I did fax Senator Seabrook's office, asking for his DNA, and followed up with several calls that were not returned.)

If I hoped to discover a Seabrook signature from a relatively small sample, I would probably have more success if I sampled Seabrooks living near the place where our common ancestor—the original Mr. Seabrook—might have lived. This is how Sykes had conducted his study: he obtained DNA from Sykeses in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire, where, historical records show, the name Sykes comes from (the word means moorland stream in Old English), and where the largest concentration of Sykeses in England still live. The results of Sykes's study appeared to confirm the research of George Redmonds, a British-surname historian and the author of "Surnames and Genealogy: A New Approach," published in 1997. According to Redmonds, in many cases even relatively common surnames derive from a single ancestor, rather than from multiple progenitors, as is generally believed.

Redmonds came to the May, 2000, annual conference of the National Genealogy Society, held in the Rhode Island Convention Center, in Providence, to give a talk on DNA testing and its role in genealogy, and I took the train up from New York City to meet him. The conference is the big yearly event on the calendar of thousands of enthusiasts. I looked around the Exhibit Hall, where genealogical products were on display. There was a lot of software for sale, much of it produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which has amassed by far the largest collection of genealogical records in the world. (Donny and Marie Osmond would be appearing later to promote a software package called "One Great Family.") In the Mormon faith, it is believed that family members remain together for eternity, not just for their time on earth, and it is the duty of Mormons to help unite families by locating their ancestors and performing a "sealing ceremony," a ritual binding the family together forever. Thanks to the zeal with which they have pursued their mission, Mormons have collected more than two billion names. The bulk are contained on microfilm and include many of the parish registries from England—births, marriages, and deaths,

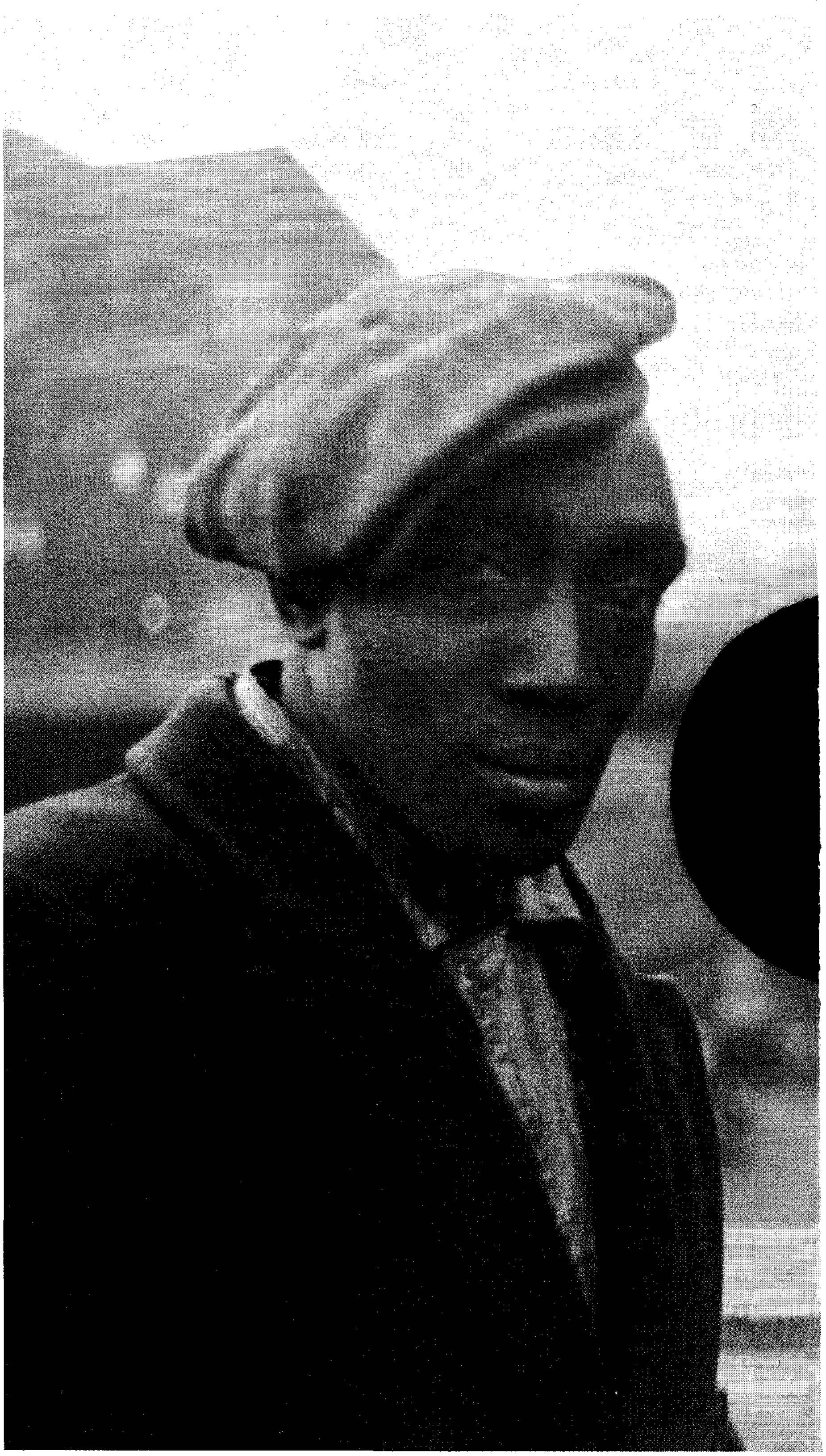


"He was conceived in a fit of irony."

town by town, going back to the fifteenth century. The main collection is stored in the Family History Library, a hundred-and-forty-two-thousand-square-foot facility in Salt Lake City, but some databases can be searched at any one of the nearly two thousand family-history centers around the country. These records are not complete, however, because some parishes refuse to turn their papers over to the Mormons, arguing that their departed parishioners would not have wanted to be baptized by the Mormon Church. Survivors of the Holocaust brought a successful suit against the L.D.S. Church to prevent Holocaust victims from being included.

I met Professor Redmonds in a café upstairs, where he was assembling a batch of scribbled-over sheets of paper for his upcoming lecture. His wife, Annmarie, was sitting next to him, eying with a certain apprehension the large-bodied Americans who were circling us, holding their N.G.S. tote bags, hoping for a little free genealogical advice from the Master. (Whenever Redmonds speaks, he is asked by family historians to perform a kind of genealogical parlor trick: they tell him their surname, and he endeavors to tell them where it comes from.) Redmonds is a bearded, snaggle-toothed Englishman in his mid-sixties, who speaks with a thick Yorkshire accent. For a long time, his views on the single-place origin of surnames contradicted the mainstream academic view, which held that surnames appeared at multiple spots, adopted by different families. He has subsisted over the years, in part, by doing surname studies for families who request them and by leading groups on heritage tours—those peculiarly American pilgrimages, in which you attempt to relive your ancestors' struggles by dragging the spouse and kids back to the Old Country. Redmonds takes the Fairbanks to the fair bank where their name comes from, and so forth. He generally offers the caveat that one can't be entirely sure that this is the exact fair bank, but his audience rarely seems to mind. It makes a good picture for the Fairbanks back home.

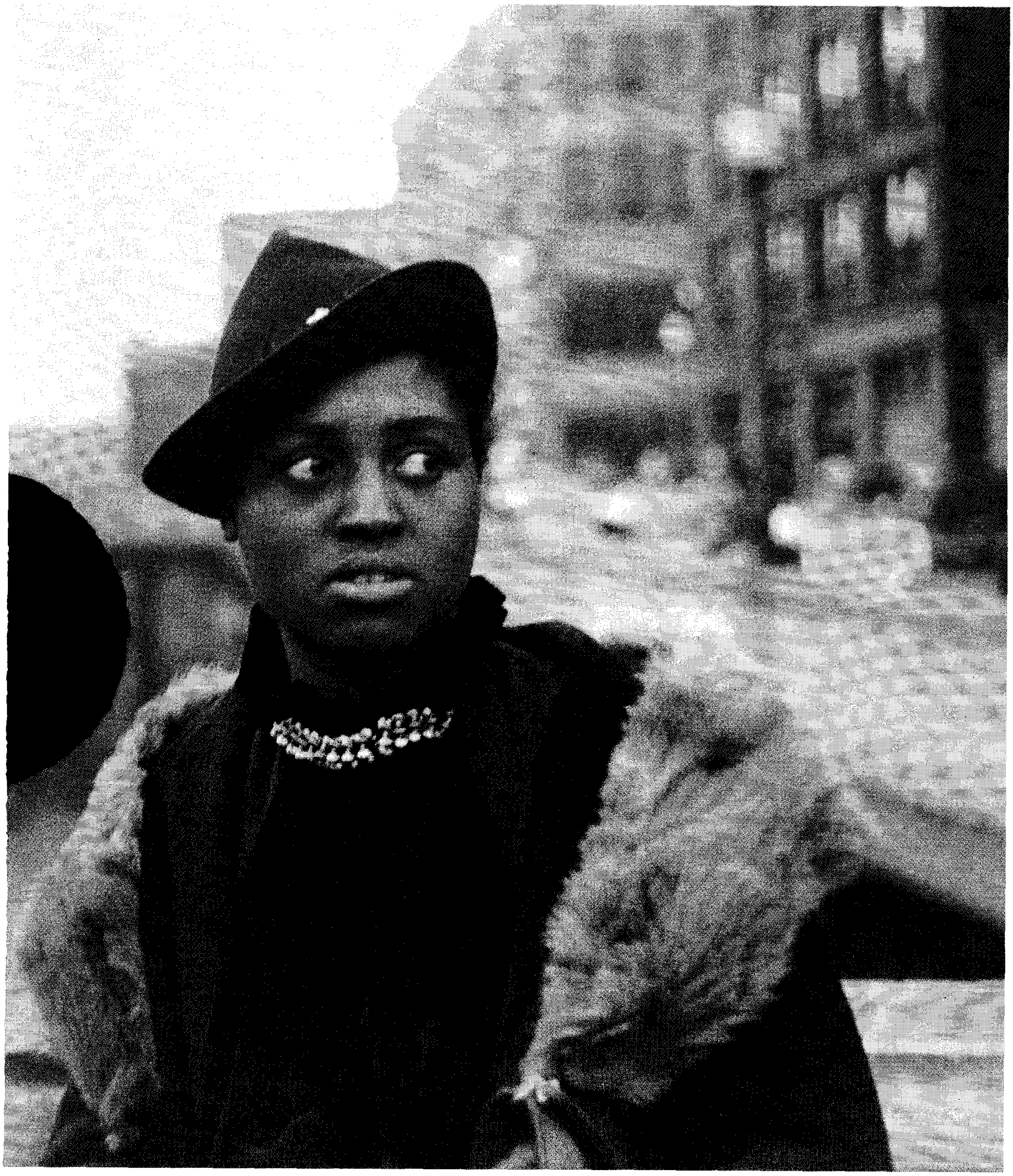
We talked about DNA testing and its impact on genealogy as it is currently practiced. "What DNA represents is a shift in the nature of authority—a shift away from the authority of the book to the authority of the test, away from the



ON PHOTOGRAPHY

EVANS REVIEWED

When Walker Evans took this picture, in the mid-thirties, he was employed by Roy Stryker, the director of the Farm Security Administration's photography project. From 1935 to 1943, Stryker sent photographers across the United States;



he then selected images, had them printed, and offered them to newspapers and magazines around the country to publicize the government's sympathy for its citizens. The images he didn't like he either "killed," with a hole punch, or simply ignored. For sixty years, those images have remained invisible except to the most resourceful researcher. Now, however, thousands of them are accessible through the "American Memory" section of the Library of Congress Web site. There are at least a thousand by Evans, and scattered among them are more than a dozen that have the same ruthless power and clarity as the famous photographs revered by curators and dealers. The only difference is that these are the common property of the citizens of the United States.

—*Michael Lesy*

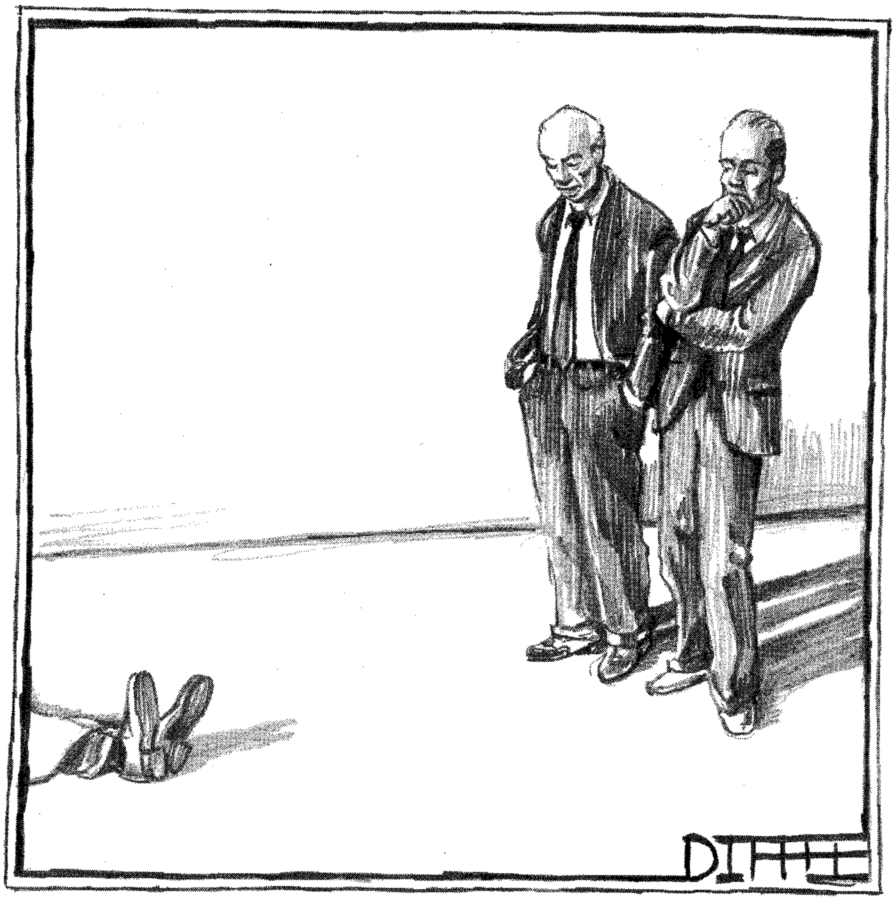
library to the lab," Redmonds said. "There has never been absolute proof in genealogy before. As scholars, we work with that understanding. Then DNA comes along and seems to answer the question once and for all in the lab. And, whether or not the answer really is definitive, people believe it in a way that they don't necessarily believe what they read in books."

I asked Redmonds for some practical advice on how best to go about finding where the Seabrooks came from. He directed me to the English Place-Name Society's publications on the development of names in English counties, which had lots of details on the origin of words like "Seabrook." Back in New York, I enjoyed another couple of days in the Milstein Division, where I discovered that a variant of Seabrook first appears in written records from the fourteenth century, in the county of Buckinghamshire, near the village of Ivinghoe, where a now vanished hamlet called Seabrook was once located. I checked this against a database of present-day phone listings on Yahoo, which showed that the greatest concentration of Seabrooks still lived in Buckinghamshire and the neighboring counties. So it appeared that a strip of territory roughly following the Chiltern Hills, running from the south-central part of the country east into the old Anglo-Saxon kingdom of East Anglia, was the Seabrook heartland. That was where I should go looking for Seabrooks to sample.

Y-chromosome analysis is available only to men, but there is another type of DNA test, which traces ancestry in the maternal line. These tests use mitochondrial DNA, which is the DNA inside mitochondria, the cellular helpers memorably described in biological texts as "the powerhouses of the cell." Every human cell contains a thousand or more mitochondria, and each mitochondrion has its own DNA. There are mitochondria inside both human eggs and sperm (they help power the tail), but only the mitochondria in the mother's egg remain in the fertilized embryo, where they begin again to multiply and soon produce a body full of mtDNA that is exactly like the mother's mtDNA. Sons get the mother's mtDNA, but, lacking eggs, they can't pass it along to their children.

Because there are so many copies of mtDNA within each human cell, mtDNA is easier to obtain from degraded specimens than nuclear DNA. Perhaps the most famous genealogical use of mtDNA was in helping to identify nine skeletons, exhumed in a forest in Siberia in 1991, that were believed to be those of Tsar Nicholas and his family. The test relied on an mtDNA sample given by Queen Elizabeth's husband, Prince Philip, who was a grandson of the Tsarina's sister. The mtDNA matched, proving that the skeletons found in the grave were indeed Romanovs. Researchers then used the Romanov sequence to answer another long-running mystery, by comparing it with the mtDNA of Anna Anderson Manahan, a woman claiming to be the Princess Anastasia, who had escaped execution. Manahan had since died, but a sample of her intestine taken during a 1979 operation had been preserved. There was no match, and she was exposed, posthumously, as a fraud.

Mitochondrial-DNA analysis can also provide a record of ancestry where no paper trail exists. Dr. Michael Blakey, a biological anthropologist at Howard University, is the lead scientist with the African Burial Ground project, in New York City, which is documenting a large eighteenth-century graveyard that was discovered in lower Manhattan in 1991. As the skeletons are analyzed, Blakey has been assembling a database of early African-American mtDNA. That database may one day be used to match living African-Americans to their ancestors. In theory, it would also be possible to collect mtDNA signatures from different parts of West Africa with which African-Americans could compare their own mtDNA, in the hope of identifying the village their ancestors came from. Last May, when Rick Kittles, also of Howard University, announced plans for a business venture to provide this kind of genealogical service, his office was overwhelmed with calls from African-Americans. (Kittles himself used DNA testing to trace his African ancestry, and discovered that he was part German on his father's side.) But his plan also drew



"From the violent nature of the multiple stab wounds, I'd say the victim was probably a consultant."

criticism. "That's like charging Holocaust victims to confirm their relatives were in fact gassed," Fatimah Jackson, an anthropologist at the University of Maryland, said. Other geneticists pointed out that in order for Kittles's applicants to obtain any meaningful result about their ancestors he would need a much larger database of African DNA than is currently available. Kittles hopes to launch his venture later this year.

Finally, and most weirdly, mtDNA data offer living people connections to female ancestors who lived tens of thousands of years ago. These ancestors are not based on archeological evidence; they are statistical constructs derived from comparing mtDNA samples taken from modern humans all around the world. In a 1987 paper published in *Nature*, Rebecca Cann and Mark Stoneking, together with the late Allan Wilson, of the University of California at Berkeley, claimed that similarities in worldwide mtDNA samples showed that there must have been a "mitochondrial Eve," a woman who lived in Africa some two hundred thousand years ago whose mtDNA all humans share. Studies carried out in the laboratory of Douglas C. Wallace, of the Emory School of Medicine, in Atlanta, have identified twenty-eight major branches in the mitochondrial family tree. Wallace has given letter designations to these "Children of Eve," as the different lineages were dubbed in a "Nova" television documentary on DNA-based ancestry, and has shown that many of the branches are continent-specific.

The enterprising Dr. Bryan Sykes has gone a step further, establishing a sort of ancient-pedigree business that allows people of European heritage to find out which of the Seven Daughters of Eve—as he calls these ancestors—they are descended from. In taking this step, Sykes may have crossed a line between good science and entrepreneurship—between telling people the truth about who they are and plying them with a fiction about who they may be. Sykes sells his service (MatriLine) through his Web site, charging a hundred and eighty dollars per test. Sykes's names for his Seven Daughters—Xenia, Ursula, Jasmine, Tara, Velda, Helena, and Katrine—correspond to Wallace's single-letter designations for seven of the mtDNA lineages in Europe (X, U, J, T, V, H, and K), and on his Web site Sykes has added slightly overheated summaries of each of the daughters' epic achievements in the Pleistocene. Tara lived in Tuscany seventeen thousand years ago, and her descendants walked across the land bridge that used to connect England and France, where they founded the Celts. Xenia managed to survive the last Ice Age, and some of her descendants crossed the Bering land bridge to get to North America—X is the only one of the mtDNA European lineages also found in Native Americans (mostly among members of the Ojibwa tribe, who live around the Great Lakes). In July, Norton will publish Sykes's book, entitled "The Seven Daughters of Eve," in which he expands on the daughters' biographies.

When I logged on to Sykes's site and looked over the material on the Daughters of Eve, my immediate thoughts were, in quick succession: 1) What a scam! 2) How many people are actually paying for this? 3) It would be kind of interesting to know which of the Daughters I am descended from. The service was a little pricey, but I was on the verge of getting a new ancestor, and what more can a family historian ask?

About a month later, a package containing several DNA-testing kits arrived in the mail—slender plastic cytology brushes with tiny nylon bristles on the end, packed in sterile translucent envelopes. I carried the instruction sheet into the bathroom. "Holding the stem, brush your inner cheek about ten times on each side to remove cells." I rinsed out my mouth, and scraped ten times on each side, watching myself in the mirror. As I was feeling the coarse bristles cutting through the mucus inside my cheek, collecting my "buccal cells" (producing a bitter taste, which made me gag slightly), I tried to conjure up an image of this warrior-princess ancestor, my Daughter of Eve, whose mtDNA has been passed from woman to woman, down through twenty thousand or so years of mothers and daughters, in order to get here to this bathroom. It was something of a stretch.

Both mtDNA- and Y-chromosome-derived lineages represent a relatively small part of the total contribution of your ancestors to your genetic makeup. If I go back four generations, I have sixteen ancestors, but since my mitochondrial DNA comes only from my mother's mother's mother's mother, and my Y chromosome comes from my father's father's father's father, together these two ancestors represent only two-sixteenths of my actual ancestry. The farther back you go, the smaller that fraction becomes. But this is exactly what Sykes is selling through MatriLine—exclusivity.

I had E-mailed Dr. Wallace, in Atlanta, about Sykes's Daughters of Eve business. He wrote back that his own group had not tried to seek commercial gain from its mtDNA work, implying that he disapproved of Sykes's efforts to do so (a criticism I heard from other geneticists, too). He also pointed out the potentially misleading aspects of DNA-derived ancestry: an individual who thinks of himself as, say, Anglo-Saxon could find out from an mtDNA test that his deep maternal ancestor is in fact Middle Eastern or African. "For example an individual might consider himself as belonging to a particular group 'A,' " Wallace wrote. "If the individual being tested was subsequently told that his mtDNA is from the 'B' group, he might mistakenly think that his personal identity is misplaced. This could be devastating. Tragically it would also be untrue since the vast majority of this individual's genes would in fact be 'A.' "

I finished collecting my DNA, slipped the brush back inside the envelope, sealed it with tape, and mailed it, along with a check, to the Institute of Molecular Medicine, in Oxford, where Sykes had established his genealogical venture in partnership with Oxford University. I had a couple of DNA-testing kits left over, and I wondered what to do with them. It would be easy to sneak a sample from my son and send it off to Gene Tree. There was no reason to doubt he was "mine," and yet the comfort of certainty was hard to resist. But I resisted it, bearing in mind what may be the golden rule of the age of household genetics: Never ask for an answer you don't need to know.

When I got to England, I went to see Sykes at his lab in Oxford. He was already analyzing my mtDNA, and I had decided to use his Y-Line service to evaluate my male Seabrook samples, too. We talked in the institute's common room. Sykes, forty-nine years old, was dressed in a dark-green suit with a black T-shirt underneath. He was fair-haired and ruddy, and he spoke in the musical, aware-of-itself voice of the star geneticist, used to holding the rapt attention of classrooms and labs full of students.

Sykes has a knack for using DNA testing in dramatic, media-friendly contexts that generate headlines. He was part of a team that extracted mtDNA from the five-thousand-year-old Ötzi Man, the body of a Neolithic hunter found frozen on an alp near the Ötztal Valley, on the Austrian-Italian border, in 1991. Sykes also recovered mtDNA from a nine-thousand-year-old skeleton of a man found in the Cheddar Gorge, in the English county of Somerset, in 1997. After testing people living in and around Bath, a city near the gorge, Sykes announced that a local schoolteacher named Adrian Targett was a relative of the Cheddar Man.

Sykes's study of male Sykeses increased his fame. His conclusion—that there was an original Mr. Sykes, and that the nonrelated Sykeses were the result of non-paternity events or adoptions—was questioned by some geneticists, who argued that the nonrelated Sykeses could derive from founders of other, less prolific Sykes lines. (Alan Savin, an amateur genealogist in Britain who has conducted a similar study, of British Savins, did not find evidence of a single progenitor.) But the idea that people with the same name might belong to the same genetic family was eagerly lapped up by the press.

Sykes himself has the Sykes Y-chromosome signature, although he told me that it would not have mattered to him if he had discovered evidence of a non-paternity event at some point in his male line. "There are two ways of doing genealogy, both equally valid," he said, putting down a mug of coffee. "There is your cultural family, and there is your genetic family, and the two are often not the same, though you may think they are. There have already been quarrels over this, and there are going to be others, so we have to make it absolutely clear as we go forward: the biological and the paper families are not the same thing, but they are both equally valid."

Sykes said that the joint venture with Oxford University is "genetics for fun." He plans to open genetics shops, where people could stop in to get all their DNA work done, Kinko's style—sequencing, banking, database searching, as well as Daughters of Eve T-shirts. "It's all in the marketing plan," he said.

I asked whether MatriLine, his Daughters of Eve test, had much business yet.

"Hundreds and hundreds of customers," Sykes said. "Most of the interest is in the States, of course. Sometimes it's sons getting their mother's mtDNA sequenced for Mother's Day, or friends giving MatriLine to newlyweds as a wedding gift. People really don't have a personal relationship with their DNA yet. It's been thought of as a chemical, basically. But what it actually is, it's a part of your history. Think of how far your genes have come to get to you. They survived the Ice Age, lived lives very different from the lives we live now. When you reflect that, at any point in the last twenty thousand years or so, there was only one individual woman who carried the same mtDNA you carry, and that she had a daughter, and that daughter had a daughter, and so on, throughout history—it's quite powerful. It's not like nuclear DNA, where you keep multiplying your ancestors as you go back. It's one woman, or, in the case of a Y test, one man. That's what people relate to."

Sykes took me on a brief tour of the laboratory, where students and lab workers were involved in the labor-intensive practice of preparing and sequencing DNA samples. In his office, a harried-looking assistant was busy printing out customers' mtDNA sequences and Daughters of Eve genetic trees. Sykes disappeared, returning a little later with a page fresh from the color printer.

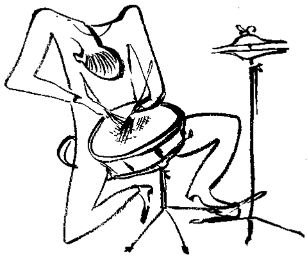
"Congratulations," he said. "You're a Xenia. The rarest one. Only six per cent come from Xenia." He paused for a moment to let this sink in, then asked, "How do you feel?"

"Only six per cent!" I said.

"And you are the mysterious X branch," Sykes went on. "Let me ask you, would you seek out other Xenias?"

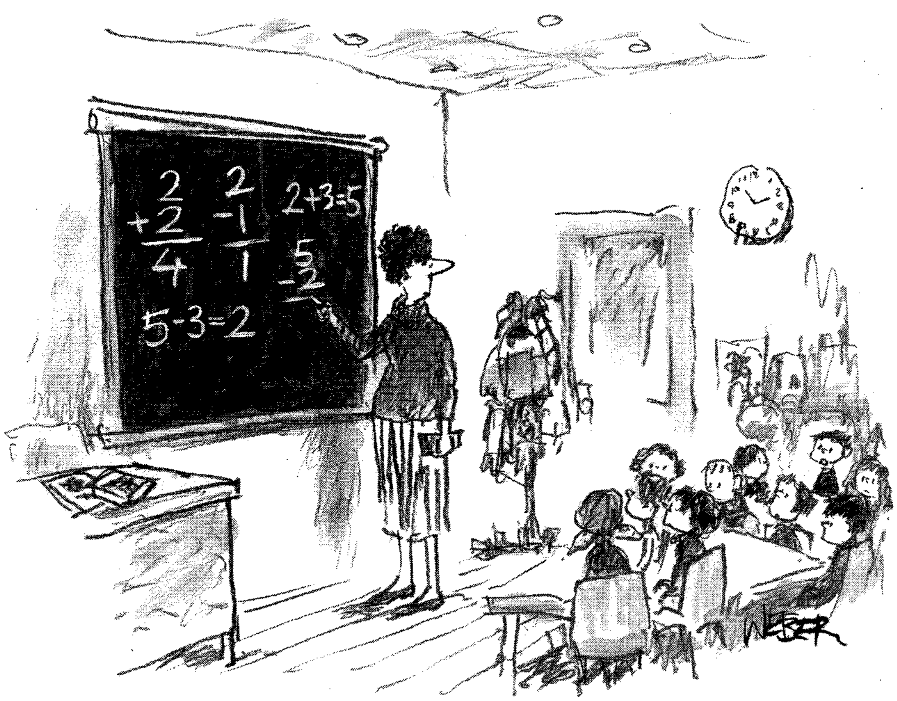
I didn't think so. I might buy the T-shirt, though.

With a flourish, Sykes signed his name under my mtDNA sequence. A vellum copy, suitable for framing, would be sent to me in the mail.



After seeing Sykes, I rented a car in Oxford and headed north, toward the Seabrook heartland. In Sykes's lab, with its racks of test tubes and its pipette-wielding technicians, I had felt out of place; there were none of the bookish comforts of the Milstein Division. But now that I was once again navigating by written records, which I had found mostly in the English Place Names books, I felt more sure of myself. I had my papers on the seat beside me, with the research I had done into the name Seabrook. Like DNA, the name has mutated over time, as mistakes, copying errors, and elisions have crept in, producing variations from Seybroke to Sebroc to Seabrooke. Seabrook is a compound word, which Anglo-Saxons were fond of. The first part of it, "sea," modifies the second part, "brook." A "sea" in Middle English meant a dweller by a lake or pool of water, but in Old English "sea" may have come from the word *saege*, which means slowly moving or trickling. Or it could be from Saega, an Anglo-Saxon personal name—Seaga's Brook. The Anglo-Saxons had many more words to describe landscape features than we do, and they seem to have been especially concerned with water. There were seabrooks, shirebrooks (clear), sambrooks (sandy), skidbrooks (muddy and dirty), and holbrooks (brooks running through hollows). "Brook" always seems to have meant a brook, though it was once spelled "brock," which also meant marsh. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Surnames, a brock was also "a stinking or dirty fellow."

The Anglo-Saxons had only one name, and this was, in the manner of modern pop stars, distinctive enough to be unique: Cerdic, Lemma, Pymma, Ugga, Sprott. But in the centuries following the Norman Conquest, in 1066, partly owing to the popularity of Biblical and royal names—in fourteenth-century England, thirty-four per cent of the men were named John—it became necessary to have two names. In England, most people chose surnames between 1250 and 1400. Surnames were not at first intended to be hereditary but were, as the word suggests, "bynames," more like first



"Please, Ms. Sweeney, may I ask where you're going with all this?"

names today. Some people chose their bynames from places and topographical features (Hawthorne, Goodwood), some from relationships (Johnson), some from trades (Arrowsmith, Cartwright), and some were descriptive nicknames, both kind (Armstrong, Fairchild) and cruel (Vidler, meaning "wolf-face," and Greeley, "pockmarked").

The road to Ivinghoe was dotted with mutant remnants of Anglo-Saxon words. I passed the village of Tring, which in Old English meant "slope on which trees grow." Ivinghoe itself was in a valley below the ancient Pitstone Hills. Just outside the village, I found a farm called Little Seabrook. As I was walking alongside a hedgerow that marked the boundary of a cow pasture, I heard the farmer and his wife on the other side. I called out that I was a Seabrook, come looking for my roots, and they invited me into the field. We walked through the pasture to the spot where, according to the farmer, Bernard Keable, the hamlet of Seabrook had once stood. "Supposedly, if you look at it from the air you can see discolored patches in the grass," Mrs. Keable said, pointing around at the patchy ground. A little farther along, they brought me to a brook that flowed through the field. Bernard said, "When it rains, you see, that brook floods, and this field becomes a shallow lake."

"A sea, like," his wife added.

I shot a glance at her, to see if she was putting me on. An American on a heritage tour is in a pitifully credulous state, willing to believe almost anything the locals tell him. But the Keables appeared sincere. I began composing in my head the E-mail I would send my father about this; it would be a variation on the telegram the German archeologist Heinrich Schliemann dispatched when he found the tomb of Agamemnon, in Troy—"I have gazed on the brook from which we came."

There were no Seabrooks left in Ivinghoe, but there were Seabrooks in the towns around it, and the next day I returned to the area to see if I could collect DNA from a few. The first Seabrook I tried wasn't home when I turned up at his door unannounced, and after I told his wife what I needed she looked alarmed.

"My husband's not here now, but I'm sure he wouldn't be interested in something like that." She closed the door.

After another rejection, I decided that the best method would be to call first, explain as best I could what I was after, and suggest popping by. The wives of the male Seabrooks often were the ones who answered the phone, and they seemed much more leery of the idea of DNA sampling than the men were, perhaps because women are more aware of the perils of loosely passed out DNA.

One Mrs. Seabrook who answered said, "Not another one of these shady Seabrooks coming out of the woodwork!"

Were there a lot of shady Seabrooks around? I asked

"Oh, yes—loads of them!"

By the end of a long day, I had found three Y-bearing Seabrooks, all of them elderly, who didn't seem to have much else to do when I called, and allowed me to come over and sample them. The first was Gerald, who lived alone in a cul-de-sac in the town of Hemel Hempstead; the second was Keith, whom I sampled on the High Street in Bedmond; and the last was Allen, whom I got in his parlor in Chesham, as his wife sat next to him drinking tea. My technique was to chat about our respective families until the moment seemed right to withdraw the sampler from my pocket.

I asked each of these Seabrooks what he knew of his own ancestors, and was surprised to discover that not one of them knew anything more about his family history than the name of his grandparents. On the other hand, all the Seabrooks knew a lot about their houses, and the history of the villages I found them in. Could it be that Americans' fascination with genealogy springs in part from our lack of interest in the history of the buildings and towns we live in? In the United States, everything gets thrown out or torn down too fast, until all we've got left is our genes.

On Saturday, I drove up to Suffolk, to see if I could find the grave of Thomas Seabrook, my crossing ancestor's father. According to my grandfather's genealogy, he is buried in the village of Stradishall. I left the motorway and entered the part of the country my ancestors came from. The land became hilly, and from the highest elevations I had glimpses of the ancient market towns in the distance—Newmarket, Saffron Walden—with the spires of the churches poking up over the old walls. My ancestors must have walked within sight of these views for at least a hundred and forty years. What struck me most about the land was that it looked a lot like the place where I grew up, in South Jersey. Maybe that's why Samuel finally settled there—because he had heard it looked like home.

When I reached Stradishall, at about three o'clock, the town was deserted and silent. Some crows were sitting high in the yew trees that grew around the churchyard. The church itself had been built in the fourteenth century, and was not well preserved; the interior was dank, and smelled strongly of mildew. The register was filled with entries from other ancestor-seeking Americans—"Found my g g g g grandfather in back!!!!" I went outside and began looking for the grave of Thomas. The grass was long and wet, and the ground was uneven, especially behind the church, where some of the older graves were. As I was walking back there, the earth gave way under my foot. I staggered backward and then cautiously peered down into the hole. It seemed to go all the way down into a grave.

I looked everywhere, but could find no Seabrook. Then I noticed a row of four stones that were so covered with ivy that I had mistaken them for part of the ground. I pulled the ivy away from the first stone. The lettering was too worn to read by eye, but by tracing with my fingertip along the declivity in the stone I could spell out the letter "S," then "e," then "a," until I got "Seabrook." It was a moment that DNA couldn't touch.

While searching online for Seabrooks to sample, I had sent an E-mail to a Colin Seabrook, who lived just outside Ipswich, a medium-sized city in southeast England. Shortly after returning to New York, I received a reply from him. He declined to take the DNA test, but by comparing genealogies we discovered we had a common ancestor in Richard Seabrook, my great-times-five grandfather and Colin's times-six—which made us sixth cousins once removed. Colin added that he had a "shedful" of information about the Reverend Thomas Seabrook. "With what I know about the Reverend, I could write a small book," Colin said. Apparently, the grave I had found in Stradishall was not Thomas's—he was in a different village altogether. If I felt like coming back to England, Colin wrote, "I'll take you to where the Reverend is buried."

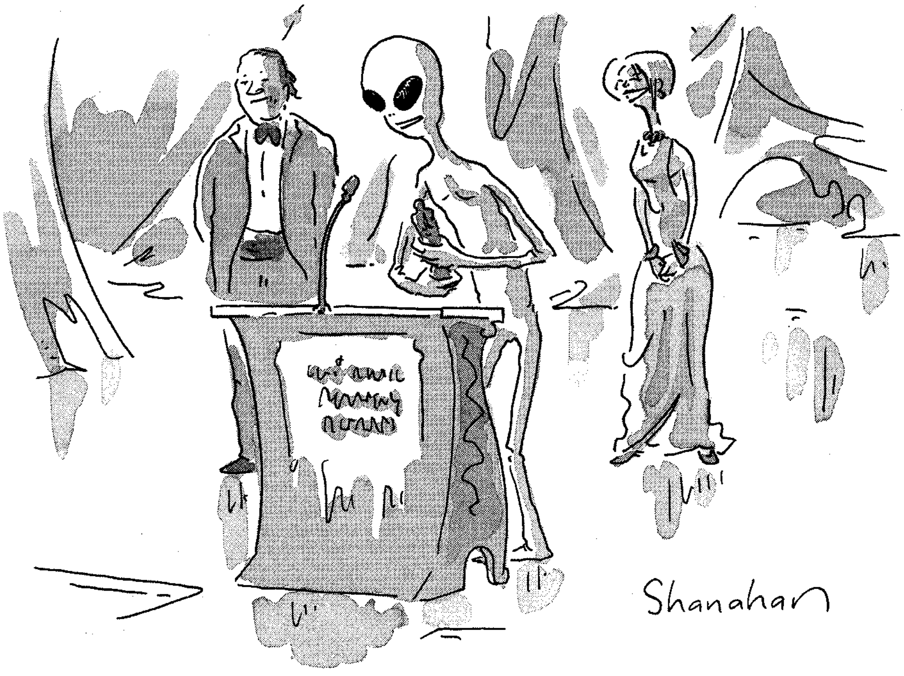
So on a cold, black December day I drove up the A 12 from London, heading northeast past Colchester, the oldest settled town in Britain, and reached Ipswich about midday. The historic meeting between the two branches of the family tree which were separated by Samuel's crossing took place in a car park outside a Toys R Us. I had no idea what Colin looked like, and although we shared the same Y chromosome, the known physical traits the Y expresses, apart from maleness, are hairy ears in Indian men and shape of the tooth. As I walked around peering at the shoppers in the rain, I spotted a nose that looked exactly like the one on my brother's face, Norman in size but Anglo-Saxon in aquilinity—quite a honker. Sure enough, it was Colin.

Colin was fifty-one and had curly salt-and-pepper gray hair and a long neck (like mine). He was friendly—not the least bit brock-like. His father had been a butcher, his grandfather a farmer, and he was a mechanical engineer with British Telecom. Colin had made a large family tree of Seabrooks, which he printed out on a continuous-roll printer, the kind engineers use for making circuit diagrams. We sat in his car and unrolled it, and he traced our connections on the paper with his index finger. I kept stealing glances at his teeth.

I was eager to see the documents Colin had brought with him, but he suggested we have lunch first. He told me about his work for British Telecom, and his two children, a girl and a boy who are eighteen and twenty, respectively, and his wife, Angela. He said his interest in genealogy started when his grandfather died. "I realized how much is lost when a person dies. All that oral history, all that knowledge of who did what to whom, disappears."

After lunch, we spread out the documents. The "shed," it appeared, was a figure of speech. Colin had some interesting odds and ends, including the E-mail address of a California branch of the family, who are now called the Fitzpatricks, but he had nothing to explain what Thomas was like, or why his son Samuel might have left this country. Like me, Colin had got no further back than Richard. He had never heard of the Dr. Seabrook who set the king's arm.

I did gain a better sense of what life as a clergyman had been like in this part of Suffolk. Colin showed me a document from the Barnardiston parish registry, which is stored in the records office at Bury St. Edmunds, making Thomas a curate. He was to receive a hundred pounds a year, plus surplus fees—weddings, burials, baptisms—to be paid by the Reverend John Maddy, who was the rector of Stansfield Church. Thomas was responsible for three churches, in



"First, I'd like to thank everyone who believed in me."

three villages, although the contract specified that he was not required to travel more than fifteen miles on a Sunday. And "We do further assign and alot unto you the rectory house for your residence, with the offices, stables, gardens."

That night, the winds were so strong that they blew the roofs off houses in Cardiff. Nothing so organized as a nor'easter or a hurricane, the gale was nevertheless a great blow. As I lay in my hotel room listening to the wind roaring, I remembered the way Colin's nose looked, when I first glimpsed it in the Toys R Us parking lot. I couldn't get that nose out of my mind. I knew that the similarity to my brother's nose was probably a coincidence, but I clung to this bit of physical kinship. Perhaps this was what I was looking to my ancestors to find—some echo of myself.

The next morning, as I was coming out of the dining room after breakfast, I saw Colin waiting for me in the lobby. He had arisen early to see Angela and some of her friends off for a bit of shopping in the outlet malls on the French side of the Chunnel. I got my things and we set off in Colin's car, heading for Bury St. Edmunds, resting place of the martyred king of East Anglia, Edmund, whose lungs were ripped out by the Viking leader Ivar the Boneless in 869. Leaving the modern Britain behind, we entered the timeless English countryside, with its perfectly worked fields, deep lanes, and ancient hedgerows.

As we entered the cemetery at Rede, the northernmost of the churches on Thomas's route, there was a rumbling sound, and several huge, extremely healthy-looking workhorses charged across the neighboring pasture to have a look at us, water flying from their steaming bodies, their vitality making a vivid contrast to the dank, licheny silence of the churchyard. The sky had clouded over and rain was threatening again. There were molehills everywhere.

"Moles like worms," Colin said.

We continued on to the village of Wickhambrook, where Thomas had succeeded John Maddy as vicar, although he served for only a year, until his death, at the age of fifty-eight.

The interior had the bone-chilling cold peculiar to old churches, which perhaps contributed to Thomas's untimely death. Bits of the original building had been preserved, and there was a north door, typical of the way the Vikings built churches. The stained glass in the windows had been smashed by Puritans in the seventeenth century, all except for a few panes high above the altar.

I walked around, peering at the inscriptions in the walls, until Colin said, "You just walked over Thomas." I looked down, and there was a cracked stone with his name and dates, saying he had been the vicar here. The stone was broken in five or six places, and the words were fractured, the letters beginning to tumble into one another. I took a picture of Colin in front of it, and took another close up, so that I could show Colin's nose to my brother.

Just before Christmas, I got back from Sykes's lab the results of my first six Seabrook-DNA samples. Sykes had compared nine sites on the Y chromosomes. The first two English Seabrooks I sampled, Gerald and Keith, matched one another at all nine sites, and the DNA of Allen, the third English Seabrook, was very close to that of Gerald and Keith. A white American Seabrook, William, of Farmingdale, Long Island, who had also volunteered for my experiment, turned out to be an exact match for my Y at all nine sites. We are only one mutation from Allen, and two from Keith and Gerald. The sole Seabrook who didn't match any of the rest is Jeffrey Scott, of Texas, the scion of the South Carolina Seabrooks.

Sykes called me about my chart shortly after New Year's. He told me what I wanted to hear: he believed the study showed a characteristic Seabrook-family signature on my Y chromosome. "It's a very interesting study, really. It shows all of you except Jeffrey Scott are connected by a common ancestor at some point, though it's hard to say when. Between five hundred and a thousand years ago. Better say fifteen hundred years ago, to be safe. Still, based on this, I'd say there was very clearly one original Mr. Seabrook, from which all five of you come. And you and William are identical. You could be brothers. Are you his brother?"

Not as far as I knew, I said, my mind racing over the possibilities.

I asked about the discrepancy in Jeffrey Scott Seabrook's sample. Did this mean we are conclusively not related to the South Carolina Seabrooks? The prospect of telling my father this news pained me—he would take it hard—but I was pleased that I wouldn't have to feel any more white guilt than I already feel. However, Sykes did leave our family myth some wiggle room: "It would appear from this small sample, especially since three samples come from the homeland of the name, that Jeffrey Scott has a non-paternity event somewhere in his line." Sykes added that the fact that five of the six Seabrooks do have a similar signature is quite a testament to the integrity of the Mrs. Seabrooks. "Their descendants have every reason to be proud of their mating behavior."

The other day, I called William Seabrook, to tell him that according to our Y chromosomes we're related. I reached him at the insurance company where he works, on Pine Street, in downtown Manhattan, about a ten-minute walk from my home. If the point of this ancestor-hunting was to get more connected, then shouldn't finding a living relative matter more than finding a paper ancestor? But now that I had found a new cousin and he was right across town, I felt more wary than curious.

Bill turned out to be a genealogy buff, too, and knew that his crossing ancestor, Fred Seabrook, had come from Sussex in the eighteen-eighties with his family, and settled in Queens. He hadn't traced his line any further back than that, so it's possible that his people came from my people in Suffolk, and then got to Sussex before emigrating.

"What I'd like to find out," Bill went on, "is if we're related to the South Carolina Seabrooks." It seemed that those Seabrooks figured even more prominently in his family's mythology than in mine. He told me the story of how, in the nineteen-fifties, a couple of lawyers representing Seabrook Island, in South Carolina, had written to his grandfather, who was a carpenter in Queens, and offered him the island, saying he was the rightful heir to it—"all the land, the old plantation, everything, for payment of back taxes"—but his grandfather had turned the lawyers down.

"I mean, could you imagine what would have happened if my grandfather had accepted that offer?" he said, his voice dead serious, the way you get when you're telling the family's history. "We'd have the whole island." ♦

THE SPORTING SCENE

BEFORE THE FALL

In a nightmare season, even luck ran away from David Cone.

BY ROGER ANGELL

Like some other men who have just come to the end of a famous marriage, David Cone has a lean, unfair look of expectation these days. "I'm all right," he said, talking with me last week in the shade of some rustling, back-diamond palms in Fort Myers, Florida. "I have a new perspective. It's refreshing to be able to slip into the clubhouse here almost unnoticed, and not be the center of attention. I don't know what the next months will bring, but as things unfold the divorce will become final."

Cone's use of a marital image to describe a sports split-up is almost florid for him, but he can be forgiven this time. Now thirty-eight, the iconic right-hander expects to be pitching for the Red Sox this year, after a celebrated six-year connubiality with the Yankees, with whom he compiled sixty-four wins (one of them a perfect game) and forty losses, plus a 6–1 record in the post-season and four World Series winners' rings. As much as anyone, he set the tone for this imperial club, but a disastrous performance in 2000, when he slipped to 4–14 and a 6.91 earned-run average, ended his vivid stay in the Bronx. His Red Sox contract is not guaranteed, but if, as has been hoped, he takes his place in the Boston rotation just behind the nearly untouchable Pedro Martínez, he will be watched by fans everywhere with an eagerness that, win or lose, centers on the pale enmity he still brings to the mound and his inexhaustible sense of possibility. His former manager Joe Torre expressed this same feeling in June, at a time when Cone had made seven consecutive winless starts, with the gnomic "David has enough in the bank for me to retire on."

Pitching against the Minnesota Twins last week, in his third start of the spring season, Cone felt pain and tightness at the top of his pitching shoulder, and took himself out of the game after one inning. Aching arms are a commonplace of spring baseball, but this setback made for some long faces in the Boston clubhouse. Rest and treatment, possibly including a cortisone shot, are just ahead, but given Cone's age and recent record, there is a hovering feeling that he may be reaching the end of the trail.

"I was so encouraged, up till this, about how my arm was responding," Cone said. He has been convinced that he can still pitch, and his new manager, Jimy Williams, and his pitching coach, Joe Kerrigan, have thought so, too. "We're trying to tighten him up, and make his movement more precise," Kerrigan told me earlier. "We want him to keep his hands in closer during the windup, for better balance. From his step-back, he was almost swaying toward first base, and then, in reaction, toward *third* base in his delivery. We set up a triple video for him with Bret Saberhagen on the left, Cone in the middle, and Greg Maddux on the right, to let him see frame by frame how these other guys kept their hands in at the height of their turn on the rubber, while David was pushing out over his knees. We're just cleaning him up a little, so he can be himself."

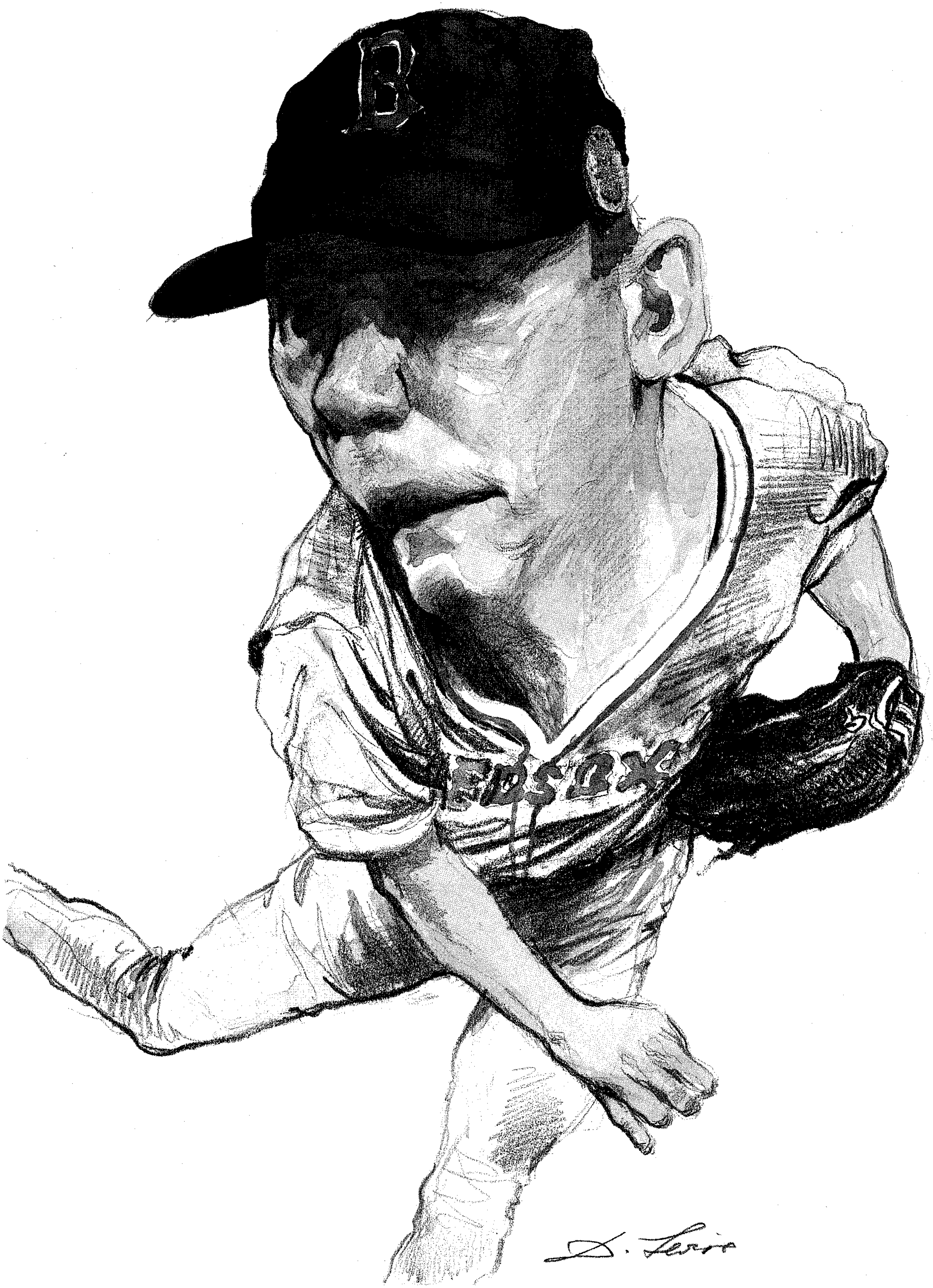
I spent a lot of time with Cone last year, and my distress over his vanished form was shared or even exceeded by the New York columnists and beat writers, some of whom dated back to his tenure with the Mets from 1987 to 1992, when they'd come to count on his ferocity in big games, his devouring sliders, and his notebook-filling, stand-up eloquence in the postgame clubhouse, even after a defeat. His problems in 2000 started early—when his first batter of the year, the Angels' Darin Erstad, took him over the wall—and mysteriously persisted. He was older now, and his fastball had lost several ticks, but he had no pain or physical problems. He'd lost the feel for his eloquent slider, which, flattened out, produced a lot of line-drive doubles, and soon he began tinkering with his motion and timing in search of answers. Once the most instinctive of pitchers—even in the middle of a delivery he didn't know where he would let the pitch fly—he'd become introverted and exploratory, with poor results. His luck ran away, too, the way luck always does when you're in trouble. Consulting my scorebook, I could find nine selected games from April to August in which he gave up twenty runs over fifty-nine innings, good for a 3.05 E.R.A. but an official 0–3 in the records. In a June home start against the Mets, he pitched like an avenging earlier version of himself, ringing up quick strikeouts and easy ground-ball outs. Then it rained, and the game was called. But these bursts of form were the exception. Matters grew worse as June went and July deepened, when Cone was hammered for eight home runs in successive starts against the Tigers, the Orioles, and the Phillies.

Taking on the Twins in the Metrodome, Cone was helpless—five walks in five innings, nine hits, eight runs. There was another killer double down the line, a specialty of his now. David looked pale, almost ill out there. Removed at last from the rotation, he was dispatched to the Yankee complex in Tampa, where the pitching guru Billy Connors put him on a mound and started him back toward some basics.

While I'd missed the air of brisk hostility that once set Cone apart, I felt closer to him during these travails and began to see, in glimmers at least, that I was getting a better sense of pitching than I'd had. The difficulty and complexity of the work showed itself in excruciating detail, now that he was struggling, while the boring mystery of success still shone

DAVID LEVINE

Now thirty-eight, David Cone has brought a vivid but exhausting sense of possibility to every moment on the mound.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EDSOX
D. Levine

brightly in my mind, even as I saw it slip away. This was not the Cone I'd watched and written about, and I hadn't understood then how quickly a sense of betrayal envelops us fans when our old heroes go south. This isn't what we want from you, this bumbling and struggling. Show us how to win again—go out there and be great! And if the Stadium fans did not, in fact, get down on Cone at any time in his tormented year—there was scarcely a boo aimed at him—that told us what his true value was.

The more I saw Cone in confusion and pain, the better I liked him. Was it because I could see something fallible and unguarded in him, now that he couldn't control the games and batters and turn them to his bidding? Or was it because he'd become more like me, to myself? Did I share in that same sneaky schadenfreude that I'd heard from my friends, now that he wasn't on top of things?

I was writing a book about Cone, but almost from the beginning he was aware that it wasn't going to turn out the way we'd hoped. Instead of an inside look at a wizardly old master at his late last best, this was going to be Merlin falling headlong down the palace stairs, pointy hat airborne and wand clattering. In the midst of Cone's horrific start against the Orioles, I was approached behind the press rows by the perennial Yankee announcer Bob Sheppard, who leaned close and in his godlike tones murmured, "Drop the book."

Cone, for his part, kept apologizing for letting me down. "Anytime you want to change your mind . . . " he said, but I didn't agree.

"We don't know how it's going to turn out," I said. "This is more interesting."

"I can see that," he said. "I guess."

The Yankees had struggled in the first half of the 2000 season, but, refurbished by late trades for David Justice and Glenallen Hill and some others, they began winning in July, even while Cone had gone south (in both ways). They maintained a cruise-control pace as the midsummer weeks went by, holding a divisional lead over the Red Sox which stayed stuck between three and five games. More S.U.V. than juggernaut, they rarely won more than three in a row and never lost more, but you could look out the windows, so to speak, and begin to enjoy the ride. One afternoon in early August, I found bench coach Don Zimmer in the big leather chair just inside the door of Joe Torre's office, at Yankee Stadium, with an upright bat in his pink hands. The top button of his uniform pants was comfortably unbuttoned. When I asked him the question about Cone that was on everybody's mind, Zim said, "Age is a crazy thing—I never paid no attention to it. If you're twenty-two and can't pitch you're no use to me. If you're forty and can't pitch it's the same. I've seen pitchers who were done at thirty-two and others just getting going. Some get a little age and they start changing what they do every time out, but that don't mean anything. Yaz and Cal Ripken changed their swings every week for the whole career, and Will Clark's never changed his. Don't worry about it—show me what you got."

David was back from his Florida tutorials in a little more than a week, and what he showed us in his next start—Saturday afternoon, August 5th, against the Mariners—was a pared-down, tauter motion, with a shorter backstep at the beginning. He threw early strikes to the tough Seattle batters but kept running up his pitch counts thereafter, straining for the K. At one stretch he went to the full count against eight straight batters. Much was at stake, and there was something like a groan or a sigh in the press rows in the third inning when Alex Rodriguez pounced on a fastball that had drifted over the plate and drove it into the right-field stands for the second and third runs of the inning.

Down by 3–2, Cone persevered, perhaps recalling the look on Joe Torre's face when he'd taken him up the tunnel between innings for a talk about body language. But Torre kept him in the game for a full six—no more runs, six strikeouts, and a startling hundred and thirty-seven pitches. When Cone fanned Mike Cameron in the fifth, the announcement came that it had been his twenty-five-hundredth career strikeout—a level he shares only with Roger Clemens and Randy Johnson, among all active pitchers—and the fans delivered a sustained full minute of applause: an ovation, of all things. They'd been waiting weeks for the chance. The Yanks lost the game in the end, going down in the ninth, 6–5 (Doc Gooden took the loss), and leaving David's ugly 1–10 W-L record intact. "It's frustrating," he said. "I feel as if I'm this far from locking in a good groove." He held up his fingers, barely apart.

David looked thinner than he had in the spring, and I suspected that his dismal season was getting to him away from the park now, too. Always tending toward insomnia, he'd been short of sleep for weeks. But this was different from the old days, when pain in his arm or shoulder woke him up every night, painkillers bothered his stomach, and sleeping pills left him down and dopey. He'd had two arm surgeries over the past five years (one of them an operation for an aneurysm in his pitching shoulder that sidelined him for four months), plus a number of midseason cortisone shots. But he had no pain at all this year—he felt great—and that, in turn, added to his obsessings in the dark. Maybe he *needed* pain in order to throw right . . . Some nights, he'd pop an Ambien, which was good for four hours' sleep, but then he'd find himself awake again at dawn. His mind would go over the places where a couple of Yankee runs would have turned things his way and made his miserable season look a bit more respectable; he knew these games and innings and pitches by heart. This built-in injustice is a commonplace in baseball, to be sure, brooded over by guys who are becalmed in a season or simply suffering through a brief slump. In July, the old breaking-ball artist Bert Blyleven, now a telecaster with the Twins, reminded David that it wasn't how you pitched but which games you pitched that mattered. This is Nembutal backward: a guaranteed formula for sleeplessness.

Luck turns into a Rottweiler for the hitters, too, of course. Paul O'Neill, suffering through a midsummer hip injury and a depressive aridity at the plate, had been hitting some predictable scorchers straight into the mitts of the waiting infielders. "Never mind, Paulie," David said in the dugout after one of these little Taser shots. "Next time, that's a chinker that falls in." But the following day he came by O'Neill's locker and said, "Remember what I said last night? Well, fuck that—you're never going to get that hit back again."

David told me now that he'd return next year, no matter what. He didn't know where—probably it wouldn't be with the Yankees—but he wasn't going to go out on this note. His wife, Lynn, said that retirement was on his mind all the time. "He's a basket case," she said one day. "I tell him he's got to put stuff like this away until the end of the season. Nobody can deal with everything at the same time this way, night after night. But you know David."

Lynn had been there through the hard games. I couldn't count the times I'd found her, well after midnight, standing amid a scattering of relatives and cops and Stadium attendants just inside the press gate—looking thin and beautiful in a stylish leather jacket, with perfect makeup and her shining hair slicked back—as she waited for her husband to appear at the top of the stairs after another horrible day at the plant. One night, she waved me over to say that she'd called Chili Davis, a cherished Yankee teammate of Cone's who retired after the 1999 season, and asked him to call David back—he needed a lift. Chili did ring him up, and when David asked where he was headed next Chili said, "Maui—living the life." After David got off the phone, he said, "Why am I doing this? Why am I still killing myself like this?"

Cone once asked me what I thought about his retiring, and I'd said I just hoped he wasn't going to be one of those guys who'd go through life after baseball with the conviction that they could still strike out the side. The great Steve Carlton, who is fifty-six now, was famously rumored to believe this, and Jim Palmer, whom I talked to at Shea Stadium one day, said that only a hamstring injury had kept him from a longer career. He had retired in 1984 but then changed his mind, and when he started up again in spring training, seven years later, he was thrilled to find that he still had his stuff. "I could still get the batters out, except that I got hurt," he told me. But guys who'd been at the Orioles' camp in Sarasota that spring—Tom Boswell, the Washington *Post* columnist, was one of them—said this wasn't true at all: Palmer had been atrocious.

I kept trying to think of something useful to say to David, to help him make up his mind, but I couldn't come up with the right examples. Dreams and pride suffused the field. Jim Bouton, still pitching in a semi-amateur circuit at the age of fifty-eight, had told me that he stopped just recently, when batters at that level began to take him deep. One doofus who'd hit a home run off a knuckler of his actually produced the ball after the game and asked for a certifying autograph. Bouton obliged but wrote "aluminum bat" in parentheses under his name.

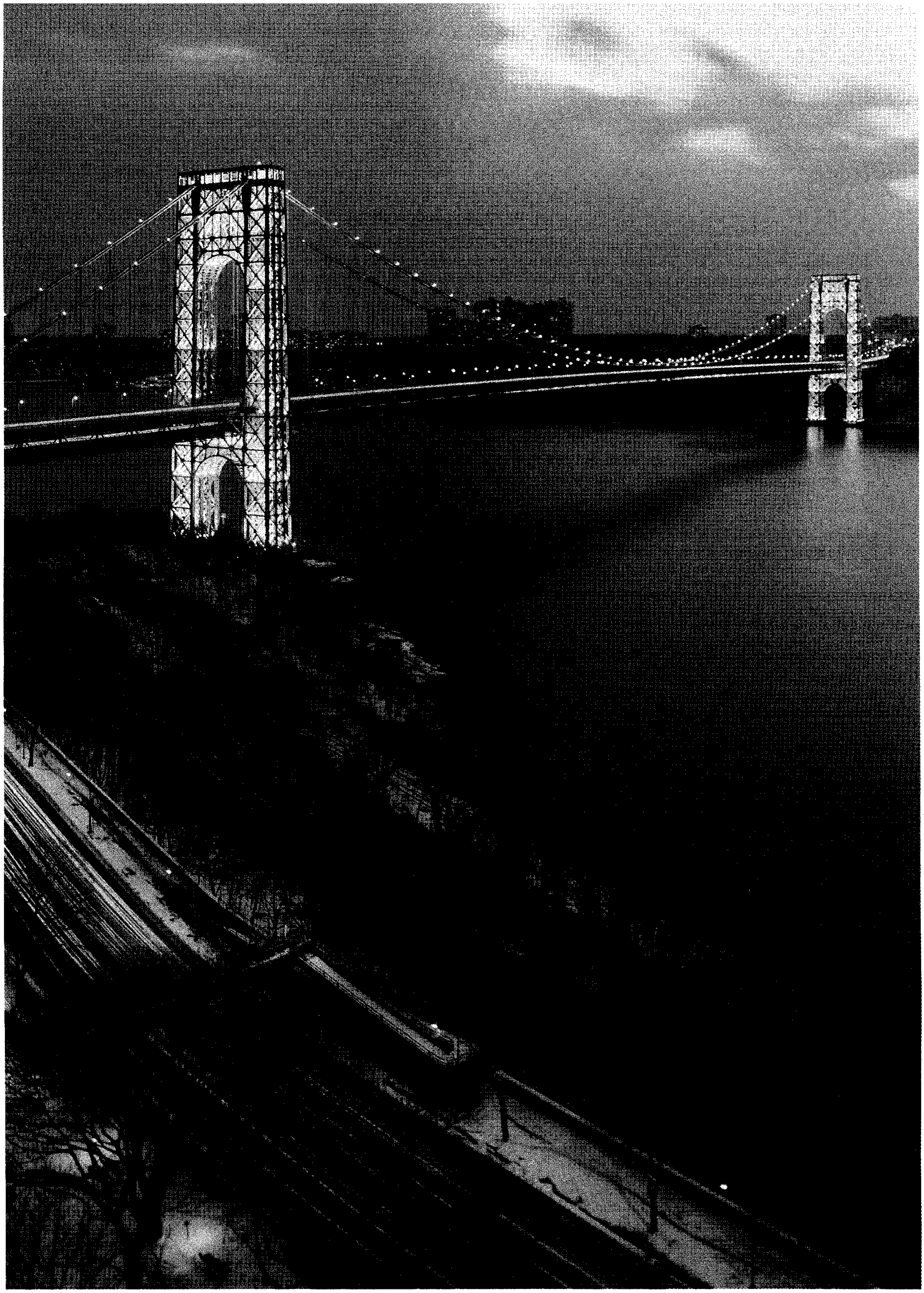
It must be torture to give up something tough and demanding that you once did extremely well, I finally said to David. If lawyers and schoolteachers felt this way, how could pitchers and tenors and Presidents hope to pull it off—people who lived off the crowds and thrilling repeated challenges, and weren't old yet except within their professions? How would you ever get used to that? I said I could remember Dennis Eckersley talking about this, the moment after he'd hung them up at the close of a twenty-four-year career. When I went back to some old notes of mine to hunt out Eck's lines, I could almost see his long legs propped up on his locker in the grottolike clubhouse at Fenway Park that Sunday, and his eyes burning like flashlights as he spoke: "I've thought about it a lot—I mean a lot. There's no getting around the fact that it's going to be devastating. It's like dying—you know it's inevitable, but no matter how you get ready for it you're not ready."

But Cone surprised me. He didn't believe that illusions about his strikeouts or sliders would haunt him once he decided to retire. It was the other way around. "I've always been a superrealist," he said. "I go over things in my mind—I can't let them alone. It's how bad I've been that gets me. I could use a little fantasy right now. Guys who can kid themselves are much better off."

He'd been smoking more. I almost never saw him light up, even when he was at home, but Lynn said he'd stopped inviting me to drive up to the Stadium with him or back home after a game, as he sometimes had, because he smoked in the car and didn't want me to know. When I asked how many cigarettes a day he smoked, he said more lately but less than a pack. Lynn said he was way up over that by now. Cone did tell me that his doctor, John Olichney, had recently prescribed Zyban, a mild antidepressant that would help you get off nicotine when you were ready. One of its side effects was powerful dreams, and in August David said that only the night before he'd found himself pitching for the Red Sox, in a dream. It was all perfectly clear—the green wall behind him and the red letters on the uniform. "It wouldn't be bad there, at that," he said musingly. "That would be a change—pitching with those fans on my side. And I like Jimy Williams as a manager. I've always wondered what living in New England would be like . . . "

And then he won. Next time out, on August 10th, handed a seven-run lead against the A's, he gave up two runs over six innings, with eight strikeouts. He had tempo, he had poise. With

"He's loyal and affectionate, and his Martinis are always ten to one."



SHOWCASE BY
ROBERT POLIDORI

GORGEOUS GEORGE

The George Washington Bridge has never really been given its due. The Brooklyn Bridge gets all the attention—the Walt Whitman poetry, the Joseph Stella painting, the David McCullough book, the Ken Burns documentary. Still, the George, as its crew calls it, is very big—the only two-level, fourteen-lane suspension bridge in the world, and the busiest, besides (it carries a million vehicles every three days)—and very beautiful.

Just how beautiful has become fully apparent only recently, and only rarely. One day in the late nineteen-eighties, somebody—Ken Philmus, the director of tunnels, bridges, and terminals for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, isn't sure who, though he's pretty sure he was in the room at the time—had the fine idea of illuminating the George's two six-hundred-foot towers from within. In due course, acrophiliacs from the Port Authority's division of bridge maintenance scaled the girders and installed 688 thousand-watt metal-halide fixtures and 72 hundred-and-fifty-watt ones. The switch was thrown for the first time at sunset on July 4, 2000.

Since then, the breathtaking glow has been seen only on five occasions, plus an eleven-night run between Hanukkah and New Year's Eve. The most recent illumination was last Saturday night, in honor of St. Patrick; the next is scheduled for May 13th, the evening of Mother's Day. Philmus and his colleagues would like to turn the lights on every night, but, as he says, "there are issues." A toll increase is about to kick in, so it might be the wrong moment for a frill. Actually, the electricity cost is only about two hundred dollars a night. The George could be lit all year round, sundown to midnight, for about eight minutes' worth of one morning rush hour's toll receipts. "Sometimes," Philmus says, "beauty is as important as function."

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

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two on in the fifth, he fanned the side. The 12–6 victory took him off the schneid—his first win in sixteen starts. On the road after this, he beat the Texas Rangers, 10–2, on a sweltering night in Arlington, with strikeouts of Rafael Palmeiro, on a first-class slider, and Frank Catalanotto, on the split, as Whiffs of the Day.

On the phone—I'd stayed back East—he no longer sounded puzzled or haunted. Lynn had come along on this trip. They'd got in some pool time at Anaheim, and they were looking forward to a family dinner with an uncle of hers who lived in San Dimas.

"I'm national news," he said. " 'CONE ENDS SLUMP!' It's been one hell of a dry spell."

Great, I said, but what was going on? How come he suddenly looked so workmanlike, so suave? What kind of body language was this?

He said that what excited him was the fastball, which had more life to it, even though the numbers were still mostly in the eighties. It didn't show on the gun, but there was late movement to it at last.

When Cone started against the Anaheim Angels on August 20th, which was Whitey Ford Day at the Stadium, I wasn't the only writer there who sensed a connection between the two celebrated pitchers. Ford, whose sixteen-year 236–106 won-lost record makes him the winningest Yankee pitcher of all, agreed. "I've thought that sometimes, watching him," he said. (Ford at seventy-two still keeps that great smile.) "He's from the other side"—a righty, that is—"but he has a good curveball and fastball like I did, and he comes from all different angles. He stays on top, the same way, and brings his shoulder out over his front foot."

Cone, at six-one, and Ford, at five-ten, share a graceful, put-together look that makes them appear a little smaller than their size, and they have both been famously businesslike at their place of work. On this day, Coney got on with it, striking out the side in the first inning, after going to three-and-two on all three batters. He pitched six shutout innings, striking out six—it was a kick to see the ice-cream-cone "K" symbols flapping from the upper-deck facings again—and departed the scene reluctantly, ahead by 3–0. Only the bullpen, which had lately taken on the texture of a damp hot-dog roll, could spoil the day: five runs in, and the game and Cone's win gone.

Three in a row would have been nice, but, never mind, Cone was back. In better form, he was suddenly performing in relation to nothing but the last pitch and the one that came next. Fastball, slider in, sinker, fastball up, curveball down, fastball inside—he called on each without musing, picking up the sign and swinging into his motion in almost the same breath, and correcting a pitch away from the plate or too low with something sharper and better that kept him level in the count or ahead. There were no pauses for forehead-wiping with his glove tip, no irritated shakeoffs of his catcher's signs, and none of the puzzled, slack-jawed starings that had accompanied his unaccountable earlier efforts. Pitching is style, and when you have it it appears innate and untouchable: yes, this is me. When it's gone, you must think and grope—it's more a psychic loss than something mechanical—and you feel bereft and clunky even before you've been punished by another defeat. Now the key had been turned, and style, from wherever it had been, came whispering back, perhaps to stay a bit and to make it all feel so easy.

Early in September, I went out to Kansas City to see Cone pitch in his old home town and against one of his old teams. He grew up here and was a famous multisport star at Rockhurst High, a private Jesuit school. Drafted by the Royals in 1981 (he was a third-round pick nationally), he worked his way through their minor leagues, only to be traded away to the Mets in 1987, at the very moment he'd been assured a starting role with the big-league club. But fate and free agency brought him back again in 1993, and he'd won the American League Cy Young Award in 1994 while going 16–5 for the Royals, in a season cut short in August by the players' strike.

This was Cone's home turf, and he agreed to drive my rental car on our trips around town or out to the ballpark, leaving me free to catch the sights and his thoughts. After Whitey Ford Day, he'd lost in a poor outing at Oakland, but he came back strongly at Seattle in his next turn, giving up a lone run to the Mariners in a winning 5–4 outcome, saved by

Mariano Rivera. Since that Tampa exile at the end of July, he had restored himself in impressive fashion. His three-and-one record for August, with a 3.98 E.R.A., was second only to Andy Pettitte's among the Yankee starters. What pleased him most was that a men-on-base situation often ended with a strikeout now instead of a double or a three-run homer. This is good for a pitcher's disposition, and I noticed that he had become calmer about the umpires, with whom he'd had some glare-offs during his struggles. A rookie ump named Chris Guccione had worked behind the plate in the Mariners game, where he failed to ring up a third-strike slider to lead-off batter Rickey Henderson but appeared awed by it at the same time. Jorge Posada, coming out to the mound, reported that Guccione had gone "Whoo!" after the ball bent over the plate. "He did that all through the game," David said. " 'Ball—whoo!' . . . 'Ball two—whoo!' At least he was admitting this was all new for him."

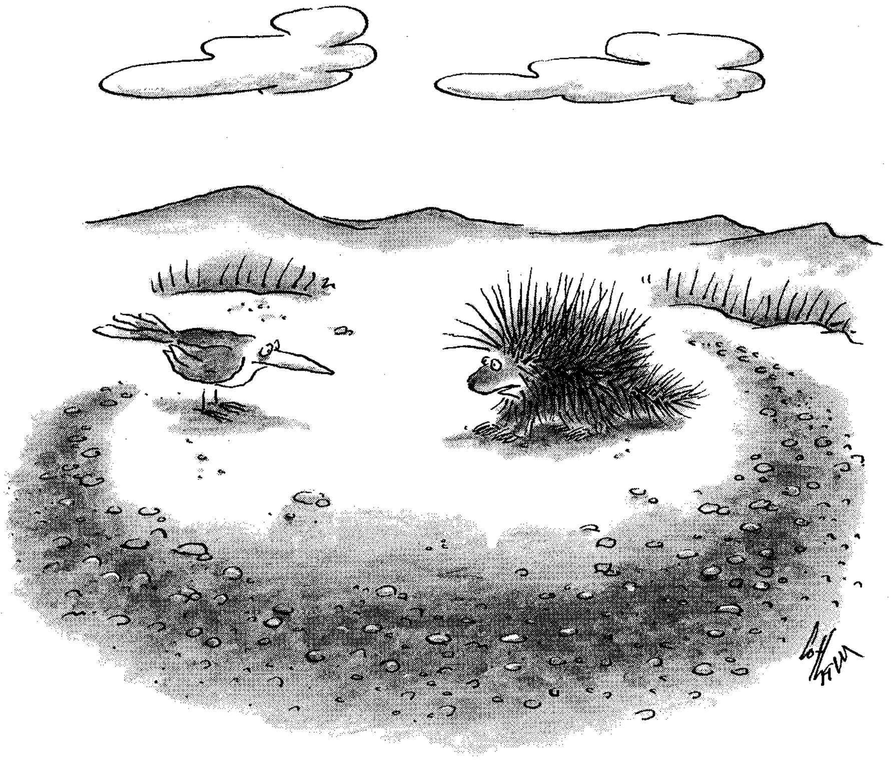
Driving back from the Royals' Kauffman Stadium on Labor Day night, after Pettitte's opening 4–3 win in the four-game series, David told me that he'd been bringing a Spanish-language CD with him on road trips, as a means toward improving his friendship with the ravishingly interesting but monolingual El Duque. "I've felt disconnected from this team," he went on. "I know I should have made more of an effort to make a bond with Jorge. Other years, you know, I used to organize team dinners—take guys out and give them a chance to know each other—but not now. I'm not a team leader. It's classic hindsight, but all I've been able to think about was that if I pitched well I didn't win, and if I pitched badly the team didn't win. I got caught up in that, and I wish it hadn't happened."

Watching the oncoming car lights cross his face as we went along, I had the notion that at long last he was able to put his pitching worries aside for a moment and free himself from the next day's burden of fortune.

He was out there pitching again the next evening, matched up against the Royals' right-hander Jeff Suppan. The weather had eased, after a stretch when the local temperature had got up into the hundreds for days on end, and a small crowd had come out to see their old leading man, or perhaps just to catch a breeze. It was strange not to be in a thick mass of fans, the way I always was at Yankee Stadium, and to be able to hear what people were saying from a few seats or rows away. The fountains out in center field did their plashy stuff between innings, and a little whiff of summer came off the infield turf. I was sitting with David's parents, Ed and Joan Cone, in the family section, up the sloping stands from home. A retired steelworker and master mechanic in a meatpacking plant, Ed Cone was a celebrated Little League and junior basketball coach in the blue-collar Northeast side of Kansas City, where the Cones once lived. David credits him unstintingly for developing his mound fundamentals and his whole approach to the game. Ed follows David's seasons pitch by pitch, via satellite TV, and also has made trips to see him at Yankee Stadium and in the big post-season games. Quiet as always, he had his David-game face on, but I think we were all convinced that we were off the hook at last and ready for some easy outs.

In the first, Cone walked the tough Mike Sweeney, who came around to score on a double, but he struck out Mark Quinn to end the inning. By the third, ahead 4–1, he had found his poise, or almost. With one out, Johnny Damon walked on four pitches, and the next batter, Rey Sanchez, squaring on the first pitch, popped a feeble infield looper to the left side, not quite in reach of Scott Brosius, at third. Cone whirled and sprinted after the ball and made a half-turning last-minute grab, falling heavily on his left side as he came down—a great play but one that you wanted back at the same instant. Splayed face down on the grass, with his arm awkwardly under his body, he writhed in pain, then twisted his head in a scream I couldn't hear—the Greek-mask cry that made for horrifying photographs in the next day's sports pages. Tended by trainer Gene Monahan and surrounded by teammates, he lay there for long minutes, and when he got up at last and made his way slowly off the field and up the dugout, with his left arm held at an odd angle, he was still in shocking distress.

Ed, leaning forward in disbelief, said nothing, while Joan slowly brought her hands up to her face. I was less admirable. On my feet, I gaped and pointed, repeating, "He's hurt! He's hurt!" His season had turned again, and now perhaps his career as well. I had seen other baseball injuries—beanings, broken ankles, outfielders crashing into fences, a third



"The sharp quills protect me from creditors."

baseman and a left fielder running into each other at full tilt and knocking each other unconscious—but nothing like this skulking little disaster.

A Cone entourage assembled quickly in the hallway between the two clubhouses—his parents, his brother Chris, his niece Justine (a daughter of his sister, Christal), his agent, Steve Fehr, and others—but I hung back when we were beckoned inside. Two Royals attendants left with me in the hall exchanged a joke about the kind of following that a Yankee player could whip up even when things went bad. The casualty party emerged at last, with David, white-faced, in the midst, heading off to St. Luke's Hospital for the precautionary X-rays. I went up to the press box, where the *Post* writer George King came over and put his hand on my shoulder. "Typical Cone play," he said.

The news was a little better than anyone expected. David had fallen in a position that threw his full weight onto his left elbow, driving his arm up out of the shoulder, but the Royals' doctor, Steve Joyce (a friend from Cone's days with the team), had been able to reduce the injury—put the arm back in its socket—after a struggle in the training room. X-rays were negative—no tears or tissue damage—and they'd take another look with an M.R.I. in the morning.

Doc Gooden had taken over the pitching for Cone, and Scott Brosius blew the game open with a grand slam in the eighth. In the clubhouse, the Yankee players told us how the crash had looked to them. And then David was there, too, amazingly, back from the hospital, slowly getting dressed and talking to the writers. He was suddenly just another Yankee with a problem, not all that different from Bernie Williams, who'd been walking around with an ice bag bandaged around his middle after pulling a rib-cage muscle, or Paul O'Neill with his hip-pointer, or Chuck Knoblauch with his damaged wrist. I asked Gene Monahan what he thought about David's crash, but he's a secret agent when it comes to his training room. "What we'll see now," Geno said, "is his bulldogness."

To the writers, Cone said, "My shoulder was in my neck. My first thought was fear. My second was that this was a fitting ending to a miserable season. My third thought was maybe I could come back."

"How's your old lady?"

• •

I drove this time, heading back to the hotel, with Cone sitting up straight beside me, his arm in a sling. He was O.K., he kept saying—not too bad. He wanted to know if I'd been in there when Steve Joyce and Monahan and some others had been hauling and tugging on his arm, trying to pull him back together. I said I'd taken a pass, and he laughed and said, "Good move."

"For twenty minutes there it was about as bad as I could stand," he said. "I knew it was serious when I saw Knoblauch peeking over and he does this 'Let me out of here' move like he's going to be sick, and backs out of the room. Couldn't take it. They kept yanking on the arm, and they began to think they'd have to take me to the hospital that way and do it under an anesthetic. I can't remember anything as bad as that—not for a long time. Then it went back in—you could hear this double sound: *Pop-pop!*—and I felt better right away."

Torre had been there, of course. David, seeing his face upside down above him on the table, said he was glad he'd been able to clear up Joe's thinking about the post-season rotation this way.

"But why didn't you make the double play?" Joe said.

So many of David's friends and relatives had turned up at Kauffman Stadium to see him pitch against the Royals that evening that he'd told the ticket lady just to let in everyone who used his name and send him the bill. After the game—after his shocking fall and later, after his return from St. Luke's Hospital and the reassuring X-rays—the best and closest of these pals have moved along to the lounge at the Fairmont hotel, where the Yankees are staying, to have a drink with him and cut him down to size. Here, late in the shadowy, comfortable room, David sits on a couch, with his left arm still in the sling that was gently slipped on by Gene Monahan in the clubhouse—a more modest affair than the Velcroed mummy-wrapping he'd picked up at St. Luke's. He holds himself a little stiffly, but relief has turned him cheerful. Sipping a double Glenlivet, he recounts the scene in the training room, when Steve Joyce and Gene Monahan and the others tried to pull him together. His mother and father and the rest of his bunch were there. They'd come to the park for another ballgame, and now they were all in "ER."

"Pretty miserable," David says lightly. "I'm going, 'Arghh, arghh!' "—he bares his teeth and rolls his head about, in boyish imitation—"and I'm nauseated and thinking I'm going to throw up, and then it suddenly, wow, it goes into place: *Pop-pop!* You can hear it. Instant relief, and the whole room goes, 'Aaah!' "

His friends laugh with him—they can't get enough of this—and David reminds them that his mother was in the training room the whole time, when terrible things were coming out of his mouth. "Dr. Joyce asks me, 'Does this hurt? Does this hurt?' and I'm yelling, 'Fuck yes, man!' "

The friends around him on the big chairs and sofas at the Fairmont are in sweats and message-bearing T-shirts and big sneakers; they look like a neighborhood softball team. Most of them are wearing caps—Yankee caps, of course—and when I ask Cone's old friend Steve Doherty about this celebratory loyalty he says, "David has cost me a fortune. I've got a whole closetful of caps and jackets back home—Yankee caps, Blue Jays caps, Mets caps. Why can't the guy stay in one place? You begin to think he's getting a cut."

Steve is David's closest friend—he's a lawyer now—and like the other local guys here he can bring back long-ago Little League ballgames at Budd Park or at one of the diamonds down behind the old Montgomery Ward plant, and basketball games at Holy Cross parochial (the court in the church auditorium, only a block or two from the Cones' house on St. John Avenue), and Wiffle-ball games in the Cones' yard, and other days and times of year at the park swimming pool or on Sunday family picnics up over the hill there. Steve and his brother Danny, also known as Flyguy, and a few more went to Holy Cross, but Craig (Birdman) McQuillen and his brother were public-school kids and met these others when they played against them in tournaments. Chris Cone doesn't turn up, but Jeff and Brian Hertzog—known as Zog and Little Zog—are here. There's also Birdman McQuillen's kid sister Tara. She's pretty, and so young that she's never met David; Birdman points her out, and she gets up and leans across the table and shakes his hand, embarrassed but tickled. These are Northeast neighborhood jocks, some of whom went on and made names for themselves on school basketball or football or baseball teams, and in colleges, too. Birdman, who's wearing a backward-facing Yankee cap, is tall and gangly, with an athlete's easy way of moving. It's hard to know whether the rush of nicknames here began with the sports scrimmages or just from neighborhood kids' hanging out together for so long, but the handles are a help to a newcomer trying to sort out the party.

Flyguy is quiet here, holding himself strangely erect in a tall chair in the corner; it turns out he's a warehouseman who recently suffered a serious back injury. When he asks Cone if he can see what kind of painkillers the Yankee trainer has given him for his shoulder, David hands over a little glassine packet and says to keep them, he's got plenty. Flyguy holds them up to the light—they're a dark red—and says, "Do you want to autograph these for me, maybe? Maybe one by one, with a tiny pen?"

The talk and the ribbing are continuous. David gets taken down for his fashionable, squared-off New York shoes, and somebody tells him, Hey, Mel Gibson gets about three separated shoulders and stuff in every picture without all this yelling and rolling around. Someone else notices that David has a tiny circle of gray hair on the top of his head, and David says, Yeah, it's sad—it used to be red. Another round of beers and drinks arrives and David fires up a Marlboro Light, to go with the double Glenlivet. "I'm taking Zyban for these," he says, holding up the cigarette. "I'm going to beat this." But everyone is listening to Brian Hertzog now, next to David on the couch, who has us squirming with laughter as he tells how he rolled over a ladder truck a month or so ago, on the way to a fire—no shit, he really did. He's a Kansas City fireman, as his father was before him, and when he came bombing down this avenue, out by Seventy-second Street, there was a badly marked construction barrier and he had to extemporize a sliding hard right and a last-minute cutback into a driveway, which brought the whole rig teetering slowly left, up onto the vertical and barely over, and crashing tremendously and finally down onto its side. Brian is a small guy, with an eager, precise way of telling a story, and we're cheering as he imitates himself clawing his way up the cab and out the top at last.

David is a lot better by the time we begin to break up. There's a late rush of autographing before the friends part. Birdman gets David to ink a message inside his Yankee cap—he whispers it into David's ear—and when he gets it back he puts the cap on backward again, carefully smoothing it into place with both hands. Cone picks up the unopened envelope of painkillers and muscle relaxants that Gene Monahan has given him and slips it into a pocket. His arm still hurts—he will sit up all night in a chair, only dozing a bit now and then—but a night like this is better than a prescription, anytime.

The next night, sitting with Steve Fehr in his regular seat behind the third-base-side dugout, I remembered what a family game this is, away from New York. We were in a section of older fans who had been early supporters of the club when Ewing Kauffman was starting up the franchise, in 1969; their privileged seating was a carryover from the reserved seats they'd held at Municipal Stadium, before the Kansas City Athletics eloped to Oakland. Steve Fehr is David's lawyer as well as his agent (he's the younger brother of Donald Fehr, the executive director of the Players Association), and a serious, serious Royals fan. After I'd met some of Steve's parents' friends sitting around us, I got the impression that they were watching the game and their young, semi-talented team with an almost botanical detachment. One of them, Helen Brown, was deep in a book; she'd never been a fan, she said, but she came to every game to be with her husband, Marty. Later, offering me a bag of delicious grapes, she asked what I thought of Al Gore.

Steve told me he thought Cone would be all right—we'd see in a week or so. I asked him if he thought David might seize the injury as a chance to retire, once the season ended. "We'll see," he said again (he is a lawyer). "I suspect he's going to want to be very deliberate. On the other hand, he might be pitching for another team somewhere, to test a change of scene. But if I was convinced he couldn't be himself again I wouldn't recommend it."

Like where, I asked.

"The Cardinals?" he offered. "Boston? The Giants? There are some good teams out there looking for pitching."

The Royals put on a ninth-inning rally against the Yankees that night, when an R.B.I. single by Johnny Damon completed a comeback win against Mike Stanton—there's nothing sweeter than that moment when a home-team guy comes flying across the plate to shut down the day—and I was delighted for my new friends, who stood up during the action and exclaimed happily when it came out right, for a change: 3–2, K.C. Too good to last, of course, and the following evening—this was Thursday—things went the other way when the Yanks, shut out for eight innings, brought home seven runs in the top of the ninth, to win the game and this four-game series, too.

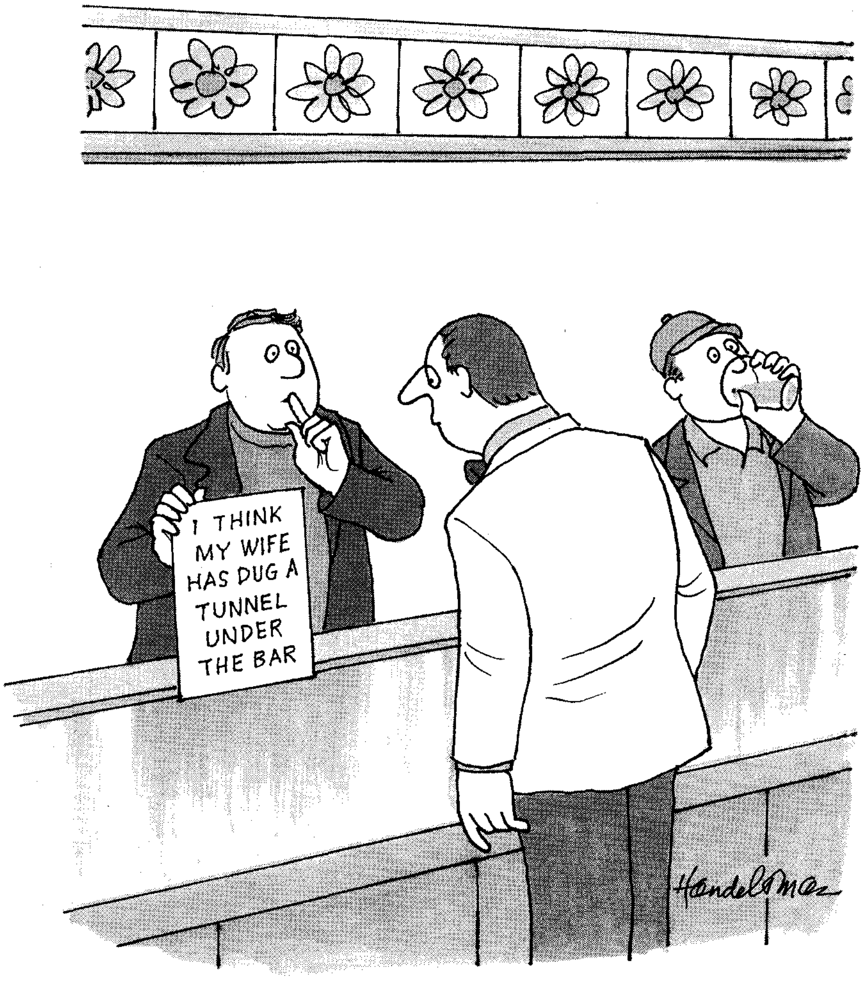
A couple of hours later, after midnight, David and I walked through a labyrinth of tunnels in Kauffman Stadium and up some stairs to a door that opened out into the team parking lot. A few older cops and maintenance people along the way said hello to him and reminded him of their names. Ed was with us. He'd been at all the games, of course, and his car was not far from mine in the almost empty lot. A dozen or so fans were gathered along a waist-level chain-link fence here, and when they called David's name he walked over. He'd taken off his sling and stuffed it into his windbreaker pocket. Earlier, he'd said that his shoulder was already much better. He rotated it for me in a gingerly fashion. He wanted to start throwing again soon, he said—maybe tomorrow. You couldn't let a pitching arm get slack because of a bit of bad luck. You never knew—he might be back in the rotation after missing just one turn. He said you could make do with limited movement on that left side for a while—it wasn't like you were a tight end reaching for passes.

He was talking himself back into the game.

There was a little night breeze moving across the empty lot, and some stars waiting overhead. Ed took David aside, out behind our car, and I could hear him murmuring, "Wear the sling while you toss," in his low, flat voice. "Get someone else to catch the ball for you. Don't take any shocks with that arm. Don't rush things."

"Sure, Dad," David said. "Sure thing—I'll be careful, you know me. Thanks, Dad." He hugged him goodbye.

Amazingly, Cone missed only a single start after his accident, but his little run of good fortune had ended. He wouldn't admit to undue difficulties from the dislocation (he said he was taking oil of cortisone, along with Darvocet for the pain), but, throwing now with an obviously hampered delivery, he went winless in four starts, surrendering twenty-three runs and turning his E.R.A. to ruin. Joe Torre stuck with him, keeping a slot in the bullpen for him on the Yankees' post-season roster, citing his toughness and record of success in big games. And, sure enough, in the fourth game of the World Series (as Mets fans will remember), he came on with two outs and the bases empty, with the Yanks ahead by 3–2, to face Mike Piazza, who'd already hit one homer in the game and barely missed another, and dismissed him on an easy pop. It was Cone's last Yankee moment. Four innings later, the Yankees won the game, and on the next night they captured their third straight World Championship. Getting the Piazza out "helped in my mind a little," as he said later, but of course it wasn't enough for him. I'd yearned for a much better ending, but we old fans always find something to cling to when the banners come down. This way, he'd be back. The Yankees play a four-game series against the Red Sox up at Fenway Park, starting on Friday, April 13th, the beginning of Easter weekend, and if it turns out that Cone's arm has another season in it, after all, he'll keep the date. He's been thinking about it all spring. ♦


I THINK MY WIFE HAS DUG A TUNNEL UNDER THE BAR

FICTION

THE GUARDIANS

BY JOHN UPDIKE

Little Lee's soft brain swam into self-consciousness in a household of four adults, with carpets that smelled of shoe soles, and a coal furnace that chuffed in the cellar, and dusty front windows that gave onto the back side of a privet hedge and a street where horse-drawn wagons sometimes clip-clopped along among the swishing automobiles. Lee heard them early in the morning: farmers going to market. On the opposite side of the street, asphalt-shingled row houses stood above concrete retaining walls, looking down at Lee's house like the choirs of angels in the songs at Christmas. Christmas was a time when a sad white light invaded the house and made the people within it very clear:

Grampop, Granny, Daddy, and Lee's mother, who was, as it were, too important to have a name.

Grampop was remarkably old, even when Lee was a baby. He would sit on the cane-backed sofa and hold stately discourse there with a visitor equally old, crossing and recrossing his legs, exposing a length of hairless white shin and the high black top of a buttoned shoe. Sometimes above the shoe Lee saw not white skin but the white of long cotton underwear, which only very old-fashioned country people wore. Unlike Daddy, Grampop wore a hat—gray, with a sweat-darkened band inside and two big dimples on the crown where he pinched it. When he entered the house, he would take the hat off and hold it pinched delicately between his thumb and forefinger; he would softly gesture with the hat in his hand as if it were a precious extension of himself, like his voice or his money. Once, Lee learned early, Grampop had had a great deal more money than he did now. These were hard times, depressed times, though the house was big and long, in its long, hedged lawn: flowering shrubs in front and on the sides, and a grass terrace behind, a lawn broken by cherry trees and an English-walnut tree, and then a vegetable garden, a pear tree, a burning-barrel, and a chicken house. Grampop had built the chicken house when he moved here. He smoked cigars, but his daughter, Lee's mother, couldn't stand the smell in the house, so he smoked outdoors, sitting in a lawn chair, or standing under a tree in a sweater, one elbow cupped in the hand of an arm, surveying the world around him, a world on which his grip had faltered.

Granny, too, had lost her grip; her hands were bent as if holding something invisible, and waggled with a disease that she had. Yet still she kept busy, cooking the meals and weeding and hoeing in the garden and watching out for Lee's welfare. When, growing inch by inch, he finally managed to climb up onto the lowest branch of the walnut tree, she stood directly below him and told him to get down. She wore glasses that sat cockeyed on her little hook nose, and these glinted in the afternoon light, tilted up toward Lee while he wondered if he should tell her that, though he had discovered he could get up, he hadn't yet learned how to get down. She looked very far beneath him. Her white hair flew out from her sharp small face like an exploding milkweed.

ELIJAH GOWIN, "CAGE" (1999)/ROBERT MANN GALLERY

It was she who pointed out that certain of the neighborhood children—the Halloran brother and sister, especially—were not suitable playmates. It was she who beheaded the chickens, on a log that stood upright in the chicken yard. It was she who, when Lee, on a sudden unstoppable bidding from within, went to the bathroom in his shorts, cleaned the yellow mess off his legs and told him it didn't matter. Granny, Lee's mother let him know, hadn't always been feeble: she had run Grampop's tobacco farm for him in their country days and had been one of the first women in the township to get a driver's license.

The family had owned a car when Lee was born, a green Model A Ford, but before he was old enough to go to kindergarten the car had disappeared and was not replaced with another. That was how poor they had become. They were so poor that Grampop went to work for the town highway crew, and Granny cleaned the houses of her relatives—she had many; she had been the baby of twelve children—to bring in a few extra dollars.

Daddy worked, too, of course; he put on one of his suits every weekday and went off into the world beyond the hedge. But the work he did there—adding up figures for other men, bookkeeping for a fine-gauge-silk-stocking factory—didn't bring very much money home. The men who worked on the factory floor, as machinists and full-fashion knitters, made more money, Lee became aware, as he began to attend school with their children. These fathers were robust, cheerfully rude men with a pleased look about their eyes and a teasing crease about their mouths that Daddy didn't have.

Also, he didn't have a belly, the way workers and farmers did. Even Grampop had a belly, on which he would elegantly rest the wrist of the hand holding his cigar while he stood in the yard smoking. Often Lee and his grandfather were the only family members out there as the warm spring night crept in; there was a dewy weight to it that pressed a wave of sweetness from the darkened lily-of-the-valley bed, or caused a scattering of cherry blossoms to fall. The old man would tilt his head as if to catch a bird's last chirpings; his glowing cigar end would somersault as he tossed it into the peonies. It did not occur to Lee that he was the reason his grandfather stood there—"keeping an eye on the youngster."

It did occur to Lee, though not in words he could say, that he was a bright spot in a demoralized household. In the houses across the street, the narrow row houses lined up like gaunt, asphalt-shingled angels, the children outnumbered the parents, and the sounds of screeching and weeping that escaped the walls showed that a constant battle was being waged on near-equal terms. In Lee's house, the only sounds of battle arose between his parents; some complaint, or set of complaints, lay between them. Otherwise, he felt the four adults as sides of a perfect square, with a diagonal from each corner to a central point. He was that point, protected on all sides, loved from every direction.

Yet there were scrapes, scoldings, childish tantrums, vows to kill himself to make everyone else sorry, ways in which he let his guardians down. Once, irritated at how his hair kept falling over his eyes as he tried to copy a comic strip while lying on the floor, he had taken his toy scissors and cut some off; his mother acted as if he had cut off a finger or his nose. Haircuts, in general, were dangerous. The chief barber was a rabid Roosevelt-hater, for one thing, and gusts of shrill debate swirled around Lee's hot ears as he huddled embarrassed on the chair, on a board laid across the broad porcelain arms. For another thing, his mother was usually dissatisfied with the haircut when he came home. Of the three barbers in the shop, only Jake, the Roosevelt-hater, could cut Lee's hair to her satisfaction. When he pointed out to her that Jake's political opinions were the opposite of theirs, she said yes, but he was an artist.

His mother had this strange idea of art, of artistry, on her mind. She would sit crayoning with Lee on the floor, her weight gracefully propped on her arm, her legs folded within her nubbly wool skirt, but for the knees, white and round, peeping from underneath. She praised

Lee's little drawings beyond, he felt, their worth—or, rather, she penetrated into that secret place within him where they were valued very highly.

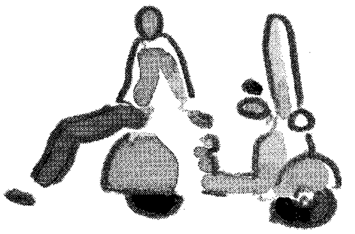
There was something disproportionate, something hotter than comfortable, about his mother. She had copper-colored hair and freckles and a temper. Sometimes after a fight that had rattled through the house all one Sunday afternoon, his father would say to Lee, with a certain sheepish pride, "Your mother is a real redhead." When Lee was even a little late coming home for supper from playing in the neighborhood, anger would show in a red V between her eyebrows and at the sides of her neck. More than once she whipped him, with a switch cut from the base of the pear tree, on the backs of his legs. It not only hurt but felt like a forced, unnatural exercise; it made him want to keep his distance. He liked her best when she sat alone at the dining-room table playing solitaire under the stained-glass chandelier shade, focussing on the turn of the cards, or when she pushed the lawnmower around the yard like a man, asking Lee to run ahead and lift up the "skirts" of the bushes, so she could push the mower beneath them. He must have been very young, four or five, when he thought this was fun—when he was flattered to play this small part in taming the property, which seemed huge, with its shaggy sweeping bushes (hydrangeas, bridal wreath, viburnum) encroaching greedily upon each other and upon the lawn, making a maze of secret shady spaces, dirt-floored caves where not even a weed could grow. He liked hiding in these caves, getting his shorts dirty.

At about the age of six, when first grade was imposing literacy upon him, he created a comic-art masterpiece—a drawing of their side hedge where the brick walk made a gap, one leafy edge slit so that a face on a long neck could be poked through, back and forth, imitating Betty Jean Halloran peeking to see if he was at home, available to play. She was tall for her age, and shy, perhaps sensing his grandmother's disapproval of her family, which lived down the street in a house without plumbing, just a pump on the porch. Lee expected this paper trick to please his mother, but she, studying the drawing and making the head poke out once or twice, conveyed a faint sad sense that he had been cruel, because Betty Jean after all was a faithful friend, one of the few friends he had.

Once, when Betty Jean's mother was giving her a bath in the kitchen—the house had no bathtub, so she stood naked on a chair while her mother rubbed her with a soapy washcloth—Lee, quiet on the back porch, spied through the crack between the ajar door and its wooden jamb. He was astonished when Mrs. Halloran, without looking up from caressing Betty Jean with the washcloth, announced to him, "Lee, do you think that's very polite?" How had she seen him through the door? Had his spying eye gleamed in the crack? He was embarrassed, humiliated, yet how else was he to see what a naked girl looked like, since he had no siblings of his own?

This lack was part of the soreness, the murmuring quarrel, between Daddy and his mother. Perhaps she would have been better off marrying one of the big-bellied full-fashion knitters; at least there would have been less worry about money. But no, there was something sensitive and wary in her nature that shunned the world around her. Daddy did not shun it—on days when he didn't do accounting he went off to teach Sunday school or watch a Saturday softball game on the school grounds—but he always returned, and he indulged his wife and son in their conspiracy about art, a way to push back at the world without touching it. "It's miles over my head," he would say, obviously not believing it, believing instead that it was beneath him, who dwelt among firm, clear numbers.

What he did not know but Lee did and his mother sensed was that crayoning was Lee's way of getting away from her, from all his guardians, into a realm quite his own, where love did not fall upon him but came down *from* him, onto the little creatures, the humanoid animals, the comically unchanging comic-strip characters that he copied, his nose a few inches from the carpet with its comforting whiff of shoe leather.



When Grampop entertained his old-man guests on the cane-backed sofa, they sometimes, in their mutual pleasure at the conversation, kicked up little balls of fluff from the same faded carpet. Lee's mother complained about this, her face getting not quite as red as it did over the smell of cigars. Lee felt her heat, the afterglow of her unpredictable passions, most intensely in the piano room, which blended into the living room through a broad archway, with side pillars and ornate white stick-and-beadwork overhead. This carpentry was the grandest thing about the house, and his failure to succeed at piano lessons, though he took them for years, was the most distinct disappointment he made his mother suffer. The piano area, with its sheet music and brass candlesticks on top of the upright, belonged to his mother; the kitchen, with its warping linoleum and black stone sink, to Granny; the front room, with its sagging sofa and dusty view of the neighbors, to Grampop; and the front vestibule and door to Daddy, who was always going out or coming in.

As Lee lay on the carpet, his guardians in their attitudes of suspended discomfort felt like the four corners of the ceiling far above him. The shelter they had formed held through Depression and world war, and even his adolescence and his becoming the tallest member of the household did not disturb the configuration, though Grampop underwent a cataract operation that made him hold his head very still while Lee read the newspaper headlines to him, and Granny stooped and her hands shook more and more and Parkinson's disease slowly stopped up her speech, and his father went gray and had to find another accounting job when the hosiery mills closed, and his mother put on weight, and the bushes in the yard grew taller, and Betty Jean became a beauty with a racy reputation and had long since stopped peeking around the hedge.

He had always dreaded one of his guardians dying, disappearing into an unbelievable nothingness, ripping away a corner of his childhood shelter. As if knowing this, they contrived to stay alive until he was safely away at college and beyond. They protected him to the last from anything too ugly or frightening. They died, at tactfully spaced-out intervals, in the order of their births. Grampop was over ninety, and healthy and walking to within two days of his death; he went to bed on the first day, and on the second believed the bed was on fire and, in escaping it, fell dead to the floor. Lee was at Cornell when he heard about this. Granny lingered in bed some years, unable to talk or sit up by herself finally, and was found one morning by her daughter, asleep for good, her sharp nose and deep sockets smoothed into a youthful beauty of the bone. Lee by now was pursuing an M.F.A. in Iowa City. For some years, Daddy shuttled in and out of hospitals with angina, and heart attacks, and his young doctor confided to the widow that he "gave them all a rough hour" at the end. Lee was living in San Francisco at the time, pursuing art and his identity, and was relieved that he could not get to the bedside in time to see his father struggling. His mother, like her father, dropped to the floor one day—the kitchen floor, the dishes just done. She had moved from the old house to a newer, smaller one, all on one level; her red hair went white and she became mild and whimsical and good-tempered in her solitude, and never rebuked Lee for the rarity of his visits. Her once-a-week cleaning lady saw the body through the back-door window, and the police and undertakers and clergy did the rest, while Lee flew in from Taos, where he had moved when San Francisco didn't work out.

Now all were gone. Of that coal-heated mid-twentieth-century household, only Lee was left. The walnut icebox, the black sink, the warping kitchen linoleum in the pattern of little interlocking bricks, the stained-glass dining-room chandelier shade, the front-hall newel post with ribs around it like the rings of Saturn or Plastic Man's telltale stripes, the narrow back stairs that nobody used and became a storage space choked with cardboard boxes and appliances to be repaired someday, the little windowless stair landing where they huddled in the pitch dark during mock air raids, the long side porch where bums knocked for a handout, the pansy-faced calico cat that came to the porch to be fed but was too wild to come into the house, the white wicker lawn furniture where Grampop would sit in the twilight with his cigar, watching the fireflies gather—only Lee was left to remember any of this.

As part of his self-consciousness, while old age overtook his infant brain, he made conscientious efforts to envision his situation as science proved it to be. He would look at the half-moon and try to see it not as the goddess Diana or as a comic-book decal but as a sphere hung in empty space, its illumined side an infallible indication of where the sun was shining on the other side of the earth's huge dark round mass. He tried to imagine the surface under his feet as curved, and hurtling backward toward sunrise. With a yet greater effort, he tried to imagine empty space in something like its actual enormity, each star an island light-years from the next, and the near-absolute interstellar vacuum containing virtual particles that somehow generated an energy the reverse of gravity, pushing the stars and the galaxies faster and faster apart, until the universe became invisible to itself, cold and dark forever and ever. He tried to picture organic life as Darwin and his followers described it, not as a ladder of being, climbing toward ever more complex and spiritual forms, but as a diffuse soup of blind genes whose simple existence within however ignoble and grotesque and murderous and parasitic a form tended to perpetuation of those forms, without the least taint of purpose or aspiration. It was all in the numbers, as Daddy had said. What was was, and would tend to be the same, generation after generation.

There was comfort in this, Lee thought. His guardians were still with him. They were within him, extending their protection and care. From Grampop—who had a quaint, tentative gesture of lifting his thin-skinned hand as if to bestow a blessing or to ask for a halt from the powers that be—he had inherited longevity, and from Granny a country toughness, a wiry fibre that had only slowly bent beneath age and disease. His father's remote realism was his, and his mother's lively, dissatisfied heat. His guardians were within him, propelling him like a tiny human crew within a tall, walking armature of DNA. They would not steer him wrong; his death would come tactfully, and was not close. ◆

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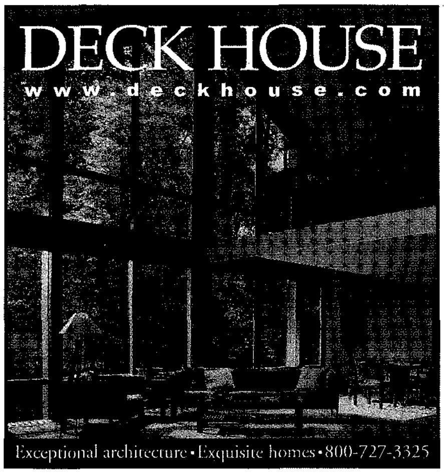
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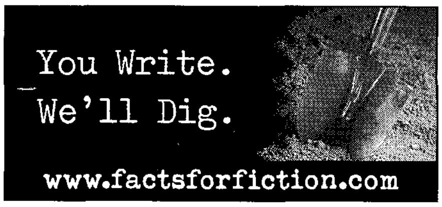
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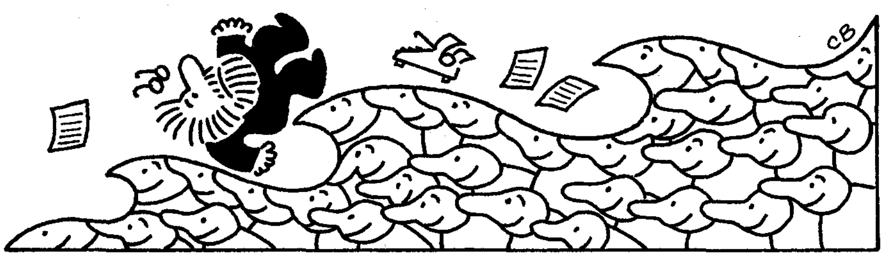

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

SMILEY FACE

Julia Roberts's reasons to be cheerful.

BY ANTHONY LANE

What will happen on March 25th? A few months ago, moviegoers and studio executives alike were so dismayed by the quality of this year's films that it became possible, indeed fashionable, to fear for the very existence of the Academy Awards. As things turned out, we are facing, if not a feast, at least a decent meal. "Gladiator" will presumably slay all tigers, crouching or otherwise, although I for one would welcome a best-director nod for Ang Lee, largely because of a desire to see him run up the walls of the Shrine Auditorium, spin over Russell Crowe, and bounce lightly off Catherine Zeta-Jones. Amid a night of uncertainty, one sure thing shines out: the Oscar for best performance by an actress in a leading role will go to Julia Roberts. No offense to Juliette Binoche and the other players, but the contest really is no contest. Not just in the hive of Hollywood but in the minds of a hundred million drones around the world, Julia is Queen Bee.

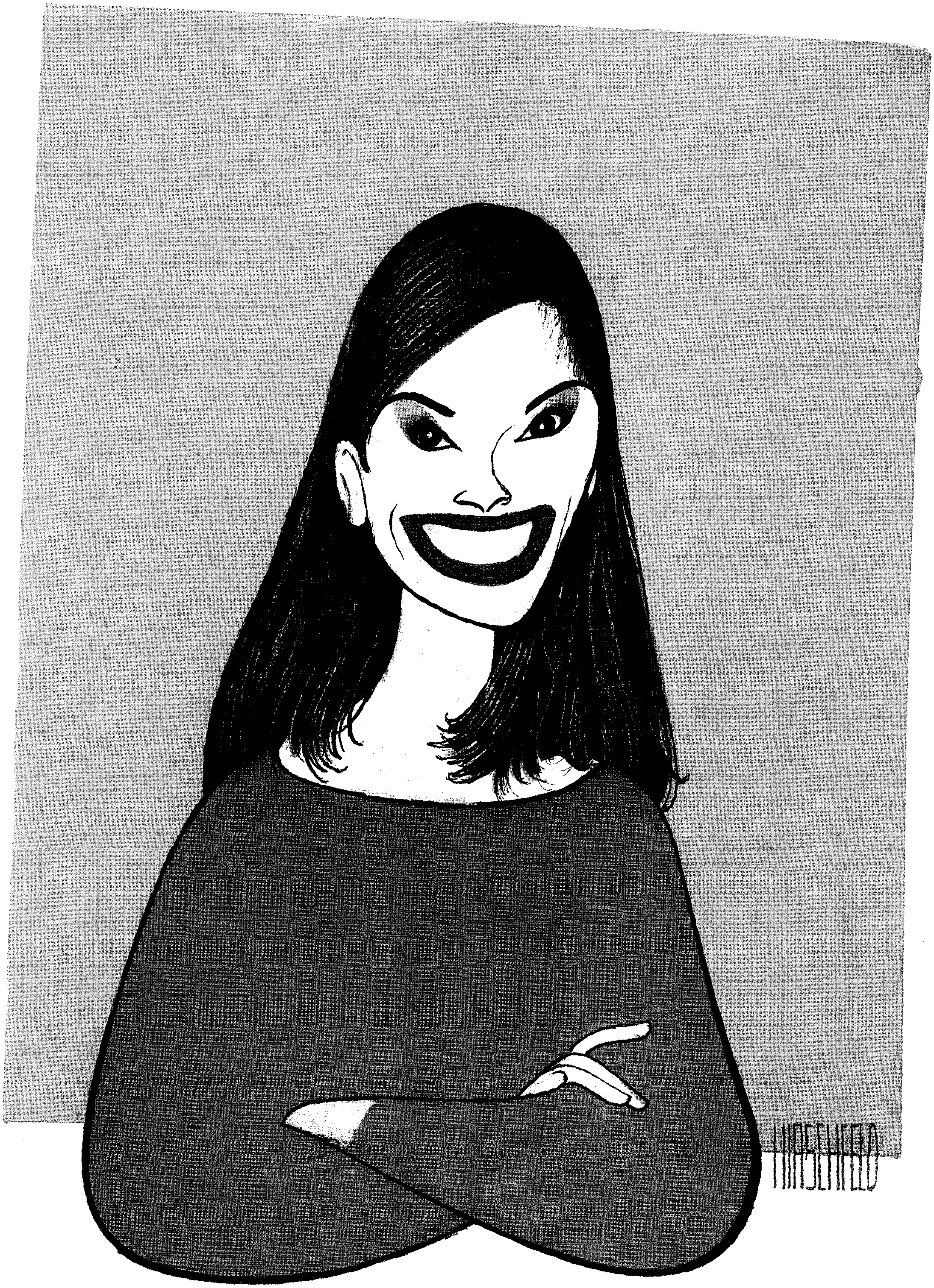
This royal status was confirmed by the receipts for "The Mexican," her latest picture. There was a distinct lack of rave in the reviews, but that didn't faze the fan base. You could argue that as many people lined up to see Brad Pitt, Roberts's co-star, as they did for the lady herself, yet even the most expert Bradologists would not claim that he enjoys her crossover appeal. In short: men like watching Julia Roberts and women like watching Julia Roberts—or, at least, women don't mind watching Julia Roberts, and, even if they did mind, they could always pass the time by watching the men watch Julia Roberts. This is an entertaining, if not an edifying, sight: if you had knelt behind the screen at the première of "Pretty Woman" and peeked around the edge, you would have seen the menfolk sitting there, slack as puppies, waiting for Roberts to unleash her grin and wondering if they could climb into her mouth.

What matters about "The Mexican" is not that it collared $20.3 million in its first three days but that, in doing so, it completed a hat trick for the Roberts phenomenon: all three of her most recent movies have slid immediately into the top slot. "Runaway Bride" (1999) ran up $34.5 million over the same period, and "Erin Brockovich" (2000) took $28.1 million. Often a lonely figure, Roberts now has the box office to herself; no other female star comes close. Her male counterparts take home two or three times as much per picture, but that's Hollywood—liberal as you like, but with the crusty old inequalities, racial and sexual, still clinging on below the waterline. The two Toms, Hanks and Cruise, are Roberts's main contenders, but only Hanks seems able to match the progress of the new model Julia, all peaks and no trough. No "Eyes Wide Shut" for her, although it's a tempting thought, especially with those dinky black masks. Just to freak the guys out further still, one of her next projects will be "Ocean's 11." Directed by Steven Soderbergh, with whom she made "Erin Brockovich," and co-starring George Clooney, it's a remake of a Rat Pack roundelay from 1960, with Angie Dickinson and Frank Sinatra. Roberts is playing someone called Mrs. Ocean: ideal casting for a woman who has overwhelmed two-thirds of the planet.

Turn back ten years, and the story was much the same. Julia Roberts, born in 1967, was finally living up to her genetic billing. She was a younger sister of Eric, the man who founded an entire movie career on the strength of his cheek muscles, and the daughter of two theatre-thirsty parents who had run the Actors and Writers Workshop in Atlanta. Now it was her turn. According to her biographer Frank Sanello, she had already been voted one of twelve finalists in her high-school beauty pageant, which makes you wonder what the other eleven girls looked like, and had been described by her English teacher, following a class reading of "Julius Caesar," as "a very emotional Brutus." Moving up a gear, she followed her brother to New York and then landed roles in "Mystic Pizza," "Steel Magnolias," and, after much lobbying, "Pretty Woman," which went on to earn a very emotional four hundred and fifty million dollars. All three films pulled the single whammy that Hollywood, in its sneaky heart, treasures above all else—not the critical and commercial hit but the commercial hit that outwits the critics and proves them superfluous, hooking up a direct feed into public taste. When the reviewers fawned over "Erin Brockovich" and—with more than a murmur of surprised condescension—over the rip and rancor of its leading lady, Roberts may have cast her mind back to the slush of yesteryear, which the same crowd could hardly wait to shake from its boots. Like many popular figures before her, she hitched a ride with Middle America and then waited a while—in her case, a decade—for her more fastidious viewers, the types who would rather die than cry, to catch up.

All of which is no reason to revise one's critical opinion. No amount of retrospection will transform "Mystic Pizza" into "Three Sisters," although the plots are not that different, and none of us can say what would have happened if Chekhov had recovered from tuberculosis and gone into the pepperoni business.

The essence of her appeal is that she is more lovable than desirable, and, even when love is off the menu, she cannot not be liked.


HIRSCHFELD

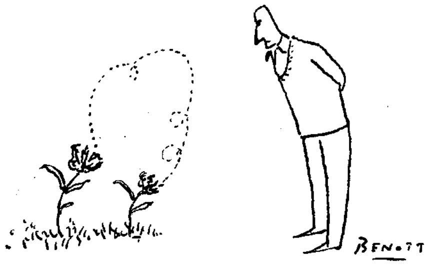
Yet the film works on its own terms, and, considering that it cost only six million dollars, which is what a Jerry Bruckheimer production spends on deep-pan specials to go, “Mystic Pizza” seems to have aged into the favorite movie of an awful lot of people. These are, admittedly, the same people whose notion of a good movie is one that enables them to lie on the couch and snuffle into their Cookie Dough Chip, but they still constitute an important fraction of the viewing audience, and Julia Roberts is mistress of their domain. One of her friends and confidantes has been Sally Field, another reflex tearjerker, who paired with Roberts on “Steel Magnolias,” in the company of Olympia Dukakis, Daryl Hannah, Dolly Parton, and Shirley MacLaine. The characters had names like Clairee, Truvy, and M’Lynn, the very sound of which, I recall, was enough to make me bring up m’lunch.

“Steel Magnolias” introduced a couple of themes that would echo through the Roberts career. One concerned the women around her; she was canny enough and, one suspects, effusive enough not to elbow other actresses out of her way, refusing to use her beauty, or the likelihood that she would be the Next Big Thing, to turn the picture into a showpiece. This generosity has seldom wavered; even in “Runaway Bride,” she is happy to let two funny women, Joan Cusack and an uncredited Laurie Metcalf, do their own running away with various scenes—a favor that is bound to play well with a female audience. Julia may get twenty million up front per picture, but look, she has difficulties with boys, and, on a good day, she is surely one of the girls.

The other strain was death. In a sense, “Pretty Woman” was an interruption; what flowed, with toxic logic, from “Steel Magnolias” was a stream of movies that began with “Flatliners” (1990) and “Dying Young” (1991), in which Roberts either succumbed to the Grim Reaper or made serious efforts to date him, and rolled straight through to “Mary Reilly” (1996), in which she wore the pallor of the permanent victim, and on to the gruesome “Stepmom,” of 1998. So ingrained is our expectation of Julia the nearly departed that I was convinced, thinking back to “Stepmom,” that it had been Roberts who contracted terminal cancer. Checking my notes, I learned that the sufferer was in fact Susan Sarandon, and that Julia’s knit hats had thus been intended as a fashion statement rather than a polite signal of hair loss. Maybe that is why “Erin Brockovich” was such a blessing, such a clearing of the sky. Erin was not just full of life but specifically anti-death; people were falling all around her, as if on a battlefield, but she grabbed the flag and soldiered on. Did all this point to a new resolution and independence in Roberts’s domestic setup, or should we thank Steven Soderbergh, who presumably instructed the caterers to slip something into her lunchbox? In many of her twentieth-century movies, Roberts had been led by her long-tressed, pre-Raphaelite looks (or misled by maudlin style merchants, such as Joel Schumacher) to come on like a nineteenth-century maiden in distress; now, in her first project of the new century, she has brought herself up to date.

“Pretty Woman” was not and will never be an interesting movie, but that doesn’t matter; the saga of its success is lurid with all kinds of interest, whether your field is politics or shoulder pads. Garry Marshall’s film had been kicking around for a while, initially as the tale of a drug-addicted hooker who sleeps with a rich guy and ends up back on the street. Then Disney bought it and painted it in Cinderella stripes; the blow job that Vivian, Roberts’s character, administers to a dog-tired Richard Gere feels like the last gasp of Reaganomics. With this movie, the eighties delivered a bitter, all but unanswerable slap to the mantras of the sixties: money, contrary to what Paul McCartney had informed us, could buy you love.

The intercourse in “Pretty Woman” represented the first and, if my research is correct, the last occasion on which Julia Roberts consented to action in the sack. Though there are plenty of bedroom scenes in her career, she either lies there and nuzzles, as she did in “Mystic Pizza,” or she lies there waiting to expire; she half disrobed in “Flatliners,” but only so that the other medical students could clamp electrodes to her skin. The leading scholar of such niceties is Craig Hosoda, the author of “The Bare Facts Video Guide.” Hosoda doesn’t do art; he fast-forwards his VCR to glimpses of nudity and labels them in crisp shorthand. His findings on Roberts are brief but forensically precise, consisting of one scene from “Pretty Woman”:



> Very, very brief tip of left breast, then right breast, then left breast seen through head board, in bed with Richard Gere. It’s her—look especially at the vertical vein that pops out in the middle of her forehead whenever her blood pressure goes up.

This may be the most telling analysis of Julia Roberts that we possess. Hosoda, the guy who causes perspiring teen-agers across America to hit the pause button, suddenly stops his exhaustive notation of “breasts” and “buns”—there are no other components—to talk about a vein. Roberts herself is on record as saying, “I’m really against nudity in movies. When you act with your clothes on, it’s a performance. When you act with your clothes off, it’s a documentary. I don’t do documentaries.” This is neatly put; it shows, incidentally, how remote she is from any European visions of cinema—not just from the relaxed, Old World attitude toward sex but from the European assumption (found lingering in the work of Americans like Robert Altman) that the scent of documentary can and should be allowed to flavor a fictional method.

It may sound mad, or cold, or downright blasphemous to claim that Julia Roberts is not sexy. Any well-briefed attorney could proffer evidence to the contrary. What of those push-up bras in “Erin Brockovich,” say, that had steam venting from critics’ ears? Well, for one thing, they were a prop; they were as awkward and distorting as the neck brace that Erin wears in the early scenes, after her car accident. She wasn’t arousing in the movie; she was mock-arousing, poking her killer cleavage at the clerks from whom she required information, and therefore, by extension, at the lunks in the audience who could be expected to fall for the same trick.

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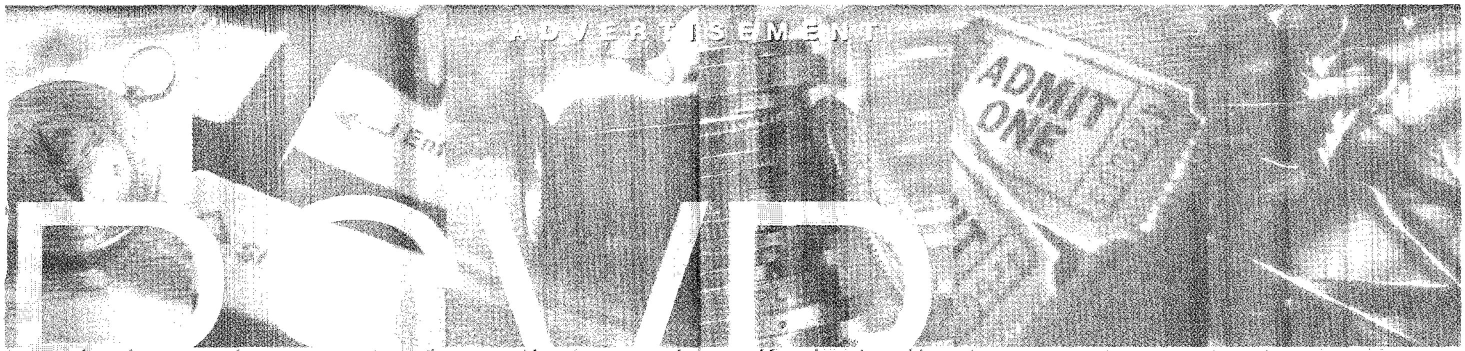

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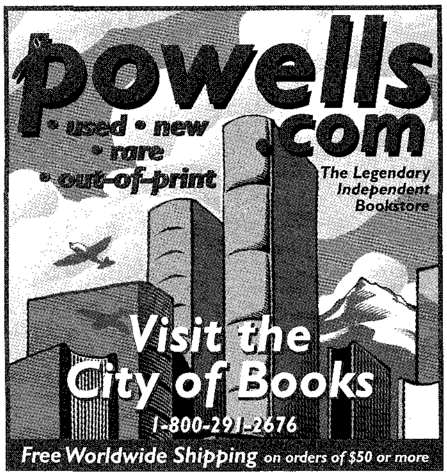
the argument, how about the smile? If Julia Roberts doesn't rely on word of mouth, who does? As her movies remind us, the pathological gaze of the closeup, something that directors of photography share only with dental hygienists, allows the oral habits of life to be writ engulfingly large. Characters use their mouths to transmit reams of promise about their loves and leanings: they kiss, drink, smoke, and smile, and it is always something of a comedown—too low a reminder of bodily necessity—to see them eat. (That's why there are comparatively few chewing scenes in cinema, and hardly any that are non-comic; the most celebrated, such as the oyster-sucking in "Tom Jones," are blatant stand-ins for lust.) Not that full-lipped stars are guaranteed to be loudmouths: Ava Gardner was no chatterbox, and Jeanne Moreau's superb sulk, with its downturned corners, was like a worldly, sex-heavy acknowledgment that all men are doomed to disappoint. If Roberts summons the ghost of anyone, it is an actress like Ann Sheridan: funny, busy, noisy, all-American, no-shit—hoping that her sensibility, however hyper, will lose out to her good sense.

The most common comparison, however, is with Audrey Hepburn; both women reign more serenely than the films that they crown, and the laughing Vivian of "Pretty Woman," like the Holly Golightly of "Breakfast at Tiffany's," switches to full beam with so little provocation that it feels ungallant to point out that in both cases—one is a pro, the other an eager amateur—their virtue is meant to be easy. They don't want to work on their backs; they want to be swept off their feet. But Audrey was tiny, Belgian-born, and never less than cosmopolitan, whereas the rangy Roberts is, in her own words, "just a girl from Smyrna, Georgia, who wanted to be in the movies and get some attention." She palpitates with worry and need; the famous upper lip, so hilariously unstiff that I am amazed she was allowed through British customs to shoot "Notting Hill," spends more time in tremble mode than in any other, and she tends to throw herself hungrily at kisses, as if she hadn't had a square meal in weeks. Hannibal Lecter would describe her as tasty. The essence of Roberts's appeal—notably old-fashioned, if you think about it—is that she is more lovable than desirable, and that, even when love is off the menu, she cannot *not* be liked. There is no more flattering illusion in movies, none that we prefer to hear over and over again: here is a goddess, and she wants to be your friend.

It wasn't always like this. It wasn't like this in 1996, certainly, when Roberts was coming off "Mary Reilly" and heading into "Michael Collins." Those are both interesting movies, although not as interesting as her decision to act in them, and the public shied away like a startled horse. Social historians broadly agree that while the mid-nineties were good for the economy and the New York transportation system, they were bad news for Julia Roberts. Her choice of titles is telling: anyone who voluntarily goes to work on a picture called "I Love Trouble" is asking for it, and her 1995 movie "Something to Talk About" was, in a word, not. The late Alan J. Pakula cast her in "The Pelican Brief" and refused to show her full-on smile until the final shot, which is like keeping Cyd Charisse in cargo pants. Roberts had already been miscast as Tinkerbell in Steven Spielberg's "Hook," where both her hair and her shorts, cropped to a dandy boyishness, suggested that, in line with the androgynous tradition of the stage, she would have made a delectable Peter Pan.

A trace of childishness has glittered through the life and works of Julia Roberts; you can feel other actors responding to it—should they chide, indulge, or defend this singular creature? In "Something to Talk About," a tale of a hobbled marriage, the confusion is rife; at one point, Robert Duvall, playing Julia's leathery father, says to her, "Now, look, child . . . you're a grown woman with responsibilities." Onscreen, she tends to register distress with the helpless speed of a hurt little girl; elsewhere, however sturdily she is castled in celebrity, legends of brittleness keep peeking through. It cannot be good for your conscience, let alone your equanimity, to know that half the country can recite a list of your lost loves: Liam Neeson, Dylan McDermott, Kiefer Sutherland (to whom Roberts was engaged), Jason Patric, Daniel Day-Lewis, and Matthew Perry. None of the above qualify as anonymous, and it



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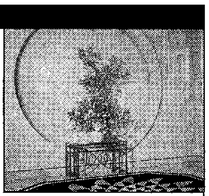

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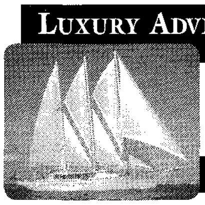

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comes as a pleasant shock to learn that, in 1996, Julia dated a personal trainer called Pat. Then there was the marriage to Lyle Lovett; many onlookers took it as a good omen, arguing with unkind logic that, if *she* was attracted to *him*, it must be love. The wedding took place in 1993, in Marion, Indiana, where the clerk of the local courthouse described them as "nice people," and went on to say, "I was very impressed but not awestruck. I was awestruck when I met Dan Quayle."

The marriage did not last. Lovett and Roberts split up two years later; one can only imagine the pain of separation, what with Julia trying to yank her mane of ringlets away from the scary Velcro thatch of her beloved. Nobody, not even the *National Enquirer*, knows what goes on in the private life of Julia Roberts, but it is difficult not to watch the vulnerable performer of that period, alternately fractious and mousy, without asking yourself what, or whom, she had to go home to. The film that snapped her out of this slump was "My Best Friend's Wedding"—a graceless work, hardly stronger than some of her comedy flops, yet humming with enough high spirits to earn about three hundred million dollars, much of it in countries where they dub everything but the smiles. The film wakes up at the exact moment when Roberts, arriving at an airport, sees Cameron Diaz shimmying toward her—not just a blonde, and not just a blonde who has been vaccinated against all known neuroses, but a blonde with a smile as canyon-wide as her own. If this were a Chuck Jones cartoon, you would get a closeup of Julia's eyes, flashing bright red like the cherries on a slot machine—"Rival! Rival!" Forget love; this was war.

From then on, screenwriters and directors have followed suit; it is as though a memo had been circulated among the studios to the effect that the most lucrative Julia Roberts movies had to be parables on the theme of Julia Roberts. Hence, "My Best Friend's Wedding" is as much a catfight for the throne of Hollywood as a tussle over an inoffensive jock; "Conspiracy Theory" is a study of justified paranoia; "Notting Hill" is a headlight turned on the deerlike panic of its heroine, faced as she is with a nonfamous man from a foreign land; and, as for "Runaway Bride," consider this conversation between the settled Peggy (Joan Cusack) and the itchy Maggie (Roberts), who just cannot decide on one man:

PEGGY: I think sometimes you just sort of . . . *spaz out* with excess flirtatious energy and it just . . . lands on anything male that moves.

MAGGIE: Anything male that moves? As opposed to anything male that doesn't?

PEGGY: Well, like certain kinds of coral.

MAGGIE: I'm definitely going to have to kill myself today.

PEGGY: Why?

MAGGIE: Because you think I'm all like, *Hey, man, check me out!*

PEGGY: No, I don't. I think you're like, *I'm charming and mysterious in a way that even I don't understand and something about me is crying out for protection from a big man like you.* It's very hard to compete with, specially for us married women who've lost our mystery.

MAGGIE: Lost? You haven't—you are *totally* mysterious.

PEGGY: No. I'm weird. Weird and mysterious are two very different things.

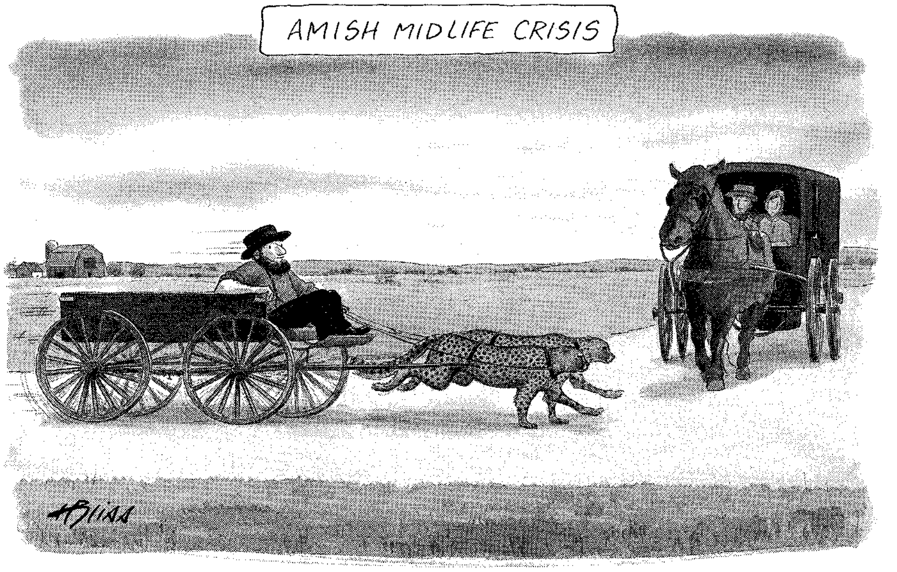
MAGGIE: I'm weird.

PEGGY: No. You're quirky. Quirky and weird are two very different things.

MAGGIE: Peggy, I think there is a distinct possibility that I am profoundly and irreversibly screwed up. Despite that, I love you.

And there the scene dies. Doesn't anybody in Hollywood know how to write zingers anymore—how to lead an audience on and then sock us in the jaw? Comedy, when it doesn't gross us out, has shrivelled into a prelude to sincerity: something to be hustled out of the way, almost with embarrassment, to allow warm feelings in. This is a dangerous practice, given that the best comedy, from Ben Jonson to Preston Sturges, was designed to strip our nobler nature down to its socks; but it is perfect for a star like Roberts, whose levity tends to darken, not dazzle, with the onset of perplexity.

That is the open secret of her success: she satisfies all the current requirements of an American star, being at once seductively outgoing in her wit, or in her rare flashes of wrath, and consolingly inward in her furrowed brow and her fondness for the homely. She looks luminous in jeans, T-shirts, and sweaters, and she looks tacky and trapped in posh frocks and wedding outfits—which is slightly unfortunate, given that so many of her movies seek to railroad her down the aisle. Indeed, with her endless limbs and uncool gait, the highest-paid actress in the world sometimes wanders through her movies like a stoned foal—one more instance, perhaps, of Roberts not wanting to frighten or freeze her average viewers, who must be thrilled to discover an ungainliness to match their own. Like both Hepburns, Audrey and Katharine, she cheers you up simply by walking into the frame; unlike them, she often seems to be casting around for reasons to be cheerful herself. Just now, she has plenty, with an Oscar in her sights and Benjamin Bratt, "my own golden man," in the palm of her hand. So, will Julia continue to be a Brockovich, or will she stumble into a rerun of the nineties? Will she get married again and raise a little Bratt pack? She ascended to fame during one Republican Administration, and there is no telling how fruitfully Pretty Woman—or Lovely Older Woman—might thrive under another. It's asking a lot, but Julia Roberts could yet be as awesome as Dan Quayle. ♦



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BOOKS

HE KNEW HE WAS RIGHT

The tragedy of Barry Goldwater.

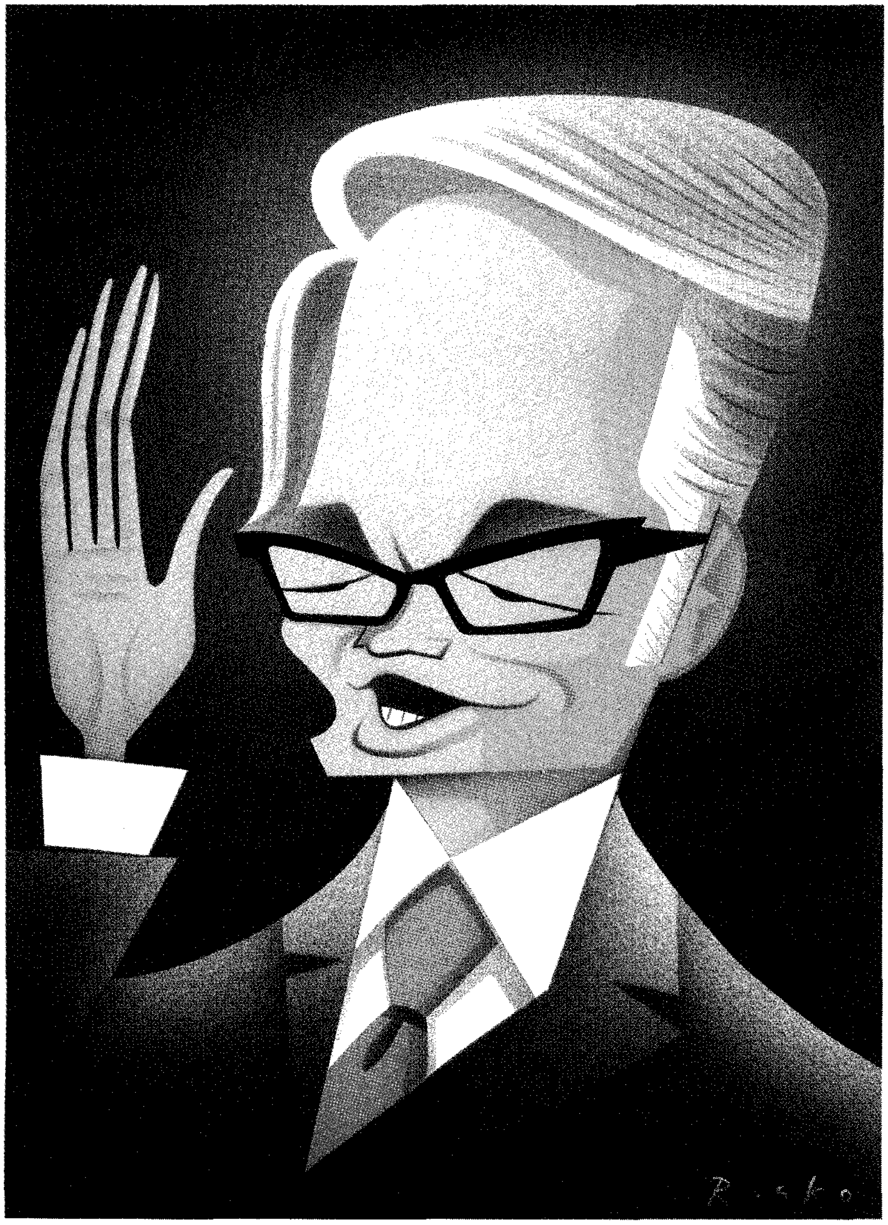
BY LOUIS MENAND

In the spring of 1964, Barry Goldwater, rolling through the primaries en route to the Republican Presidential nomination, paid a visit to the state of Georgia, where some cracks appeared to be developing in a block of delegates his campaign had thought was locked up. An excited band of supporters was on hand to greet him. One of them was selling, from the back of a truck, a soft drink he had concocted called Gold Water—"The Right Drink for the Conservative Taste." The candidate was invited to take a sip. He spat it out. "This tastes like piss!" he said. Goldwater was uncommonly quick on the trigger, and, when he shot, he shot straight. Neither quality is especially conducive to a successful career in American politics.

That fall, Goldwater was on the wrong end of the most overwhelming victory in the history of American Presidential elections. Lyndon Baines Johnson won sixty-one per cent of the popular vote in 1964—still a record. Twenty-seven million Americans marked their ballots for Goldwater, but a subsequent poll indicated that only six million of those voters were actually pro-Goldwater. The rest identified themselves simply as Republican Party loyalists. The consensus of many commentators looking back on the election was that Goldwater was a fluke, a fringe candidate who had stolen the nomination while the rest of his party was napping and had been duly repudiated by the electorate. The consensus of many historians looking back on the nineteen-sixties was that Goldwater was an anachronism, a cowboy who rode in from the wrong decade—the personification of everything the culture couldn't seem to turn its back on fast enough. Books about the nineteen-sixties tended to be written from the point of view of the New Left or the civil-rights movement or the Kennedy brothers. They were not written from the point of view of what editorialists called "little old ladies in tennis shoes," their stereotype of the Goldwater voter. The point of Rick Perlstein's animated re-creation of the Goldwater campaign, "Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus" (Hill & Wang; $30), is that Barry Goldwater was as much a man of the nineteen-sixties as Abbie Hoffman or Malcolm X, and, what's more, his shadow looms a good deal larger than theirs. It's not only that more politicians today sound like Goldwater than like Tom Hayden. More politicians today sound like Goldwater than like Lyndon Johnson.

The argument that the Goldwater campaign was the start of something big rather than the last gasp of something small is possibly a little less controversial than Perlstein suggests. Goldwater was not entirely a lone gunslinger. He plainly had a constituency, loath as he was to stroke it, and even in 1964 people could read the signs. That constituency was not little old ladies in tennis shoes, and it wasn't mad bombers, either. It was working-class white men in revolt against integration—the famous "backlash" voters. "The white backlash," the British journalist Godfrey Hodgson wrote in the summer of 1964, "fits into a broader pattern of social and political change that may rewrite the most basic assumptions on which the dominance of the Democrats had been based since 1933." Perlstein, a generation later, says much the same thing.

What he has to add to the story is really the first part of his claim, the idea that Goldwater was part of the nineteen-sixties rebellion. He points out that "The Conscience of a Conservative," Goldwater's ghostwritten manifesto, published in 1960, was snapped off the shelves in college bookstores right along with "The Catcher in the Rye." Young people in the early nineteen-sixties were in revolt before they had any clear idea what form revolution might take. "Politically, the generation was up for grabs," Perlstein thinks. First, it veered left, but in the end it went right, and much of the country went with it. "Before the Storm" is a history of the early nineteen-sixties in which John Wayne, William F. Buckley, and Young Americans for Freedom take roles usually assigned to Allen Ginsberg, Herbert Marcuse, and Students for a Democratic Society—true prophets of the new dawn. That Perlstein is committed to giving Goldwater and the Goldwaterites their due despite a distaste for their views lends his narrative a certain zest. "Before the Storm" is smart and lively, and the description is delightfully thick. No one would call the narrative streamlined, and the book is badly in need of an epilogue; but the author has a good time with his story, and so does the reader.

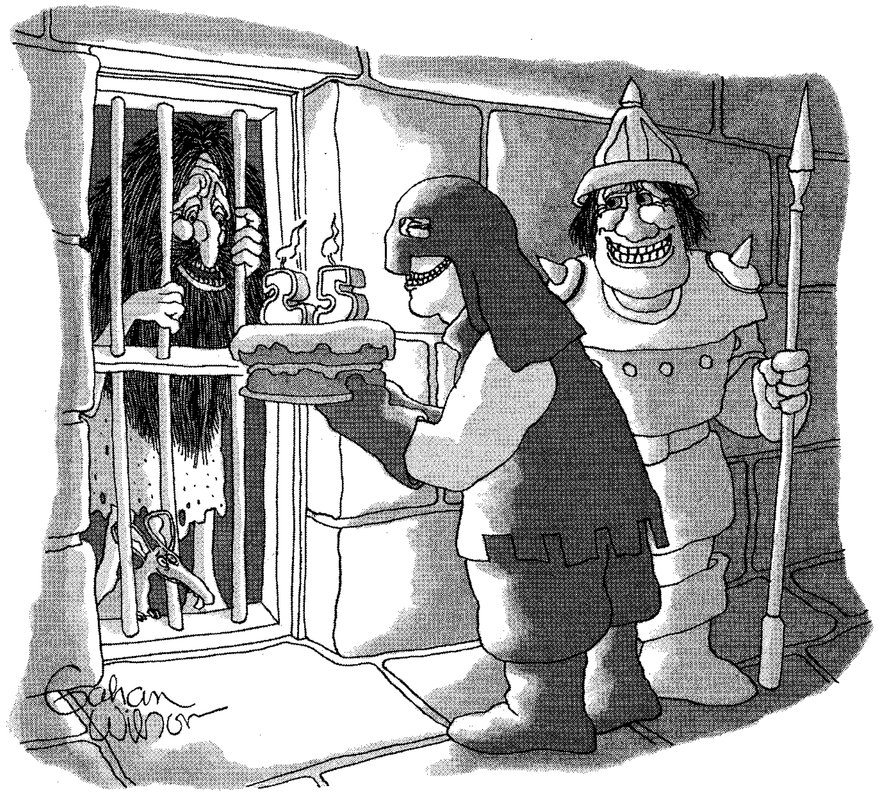

Goldwater's hatred of the establishment was not very different from the New Left's.

ROBERT RISKO

Goldwater was an enemy of the establishment. That term was coined by another eminent British journalist who covered American politics, Henry Fairlie. Fairlie first used it to refer to the network of power brokers in English life, from the Archbishop of Canterbury to the editor of the *T.L.S.* In America, it came to refer to the suits—the Washington lawyers, the New York bankers, and the university presidents, along with their academic and journalistic epigones—upon whose wisdom elected officials were accustomed to rely, and without whose approbation no public policy could be expected to succeed. The great virtue of this group from the late nineteen-forties through the early nineteen-sixties was also its prime vulnerability: it believed itself to be above partisanship and self-interest. Its watchword was "consensus," and its instrument was the federal bureaucracy, whose vast resources it undertook to direct in a pragmatic manner conducive to the welfare of all. The establishment was liberal in the sense that it believed in the power of government to solve social problems and improve the quality of life. But it was deeply vested in the status quo as well. Its members had no inclination to question the assumptions of a social and economic dispensation of which they were the most privileged products.

Goldwater's hatred of the establishment and its workings was, at its deepest level, not very different from the New Left's and the counterculture's: he believed that top-down managerial liberalism was a threat to individual autonomy, and he despised the notion that ideology didn't matter. He would not have put it quite this way, but he was haunted by the same spectre that has haunted many other critics of the liberal welfare state: the spectre of soul death. Like Holden Caulfield, Mario Savio, Bob Dylan, Gloria Steinem, Malcolm X, Randle McMurphy, Captain America and Billy—like almost any iconic figure of the era you can name—Goldwater just didn't like being told what to do.

It's one of the reasons he was such a terrible candidate. The more he alienated his audiences, the more certain he became that he was on the right track. He had no great personal ambition to be President; he saw himself as the spokesman for a set of principles, and he had little interest in bending them to suit the wishes of even his admirers. If it tasted like piss, he said so. One of his methods of dealing with chants of "We Want Barry" when he stepped to the microphone was to growl, "If you'll shut up, you'll get him." During his Presidential campaign, he delivered speeches in Memphis and Raleigh advocating the elimination of federal cotton subsidies; in Knoxville, he proposed selling the Tennessee Valley Authority's steam-generating plants; in West Virginia, he denounced the war on poverty; in Fort Worth, he criticized the award of a ma-



"Surely it can't be twenty-five years already!"

jor defense contract to General Dynamics, and Fort Worth happens to be the city where the military-aircraft division of General Dynamics is. His solution to paternalistic liberalism was also Stokely Carmichael's and John Lennon's. "We will place power back to the people," he said.

To this extent, Perlstein is exactly right: the Goldwater movement was not an undertow. It was part of the wave. "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice," Goldwater declared in his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention. "Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." They were lines that, against the pleas of half his staff, he insisted on keeping in the speech (he underlined them twice in his copy), and they are generally considered to be the lines that sealed his political doom. As Perlstein points out, though, taking extreme measures on behalf of liberty and justice was the very spirit of the age. The only people who recoiled from the idea were the suits.

Like many historians, going all the way back to Theodore H. White in "The Making of the President 1964," Perlstein thinks that John F. Kennedy's assassination made the Presidency virtually unwinnable for any Republican in 1964. It was, as he says, a "martyr-besotted electorate," and Lyndon Johnson devoted all his formidable political talents to maintaining it in that state of morbid inebriation. Johnson had been nearly as unwelcome in Camelot as Richard Nixon, but he did his utmost not to let it be forgot. He ran as the heir of a man whom he did not particularly like and whose policies he had had, as Vice-President, almost nothing to do with. He rode a dead man's coattails into the White House.

Still, although all successful candidacies are, in the end, the same—they reflect "the will of the people," after all—every failed candidacy fails in its own way, and in the case of Goldwater's there were two major wounds. The first was self-inflicted. Goldwater's inclination to shoot straight did not waver even when he was aiming at his own foot. "You know, I haven't got a really first-class brain," he once told the columnist Stewart Alsop, who obligingly printed the remark (and Alsop was a Republican). Perlstein doesn't mention that one, but there were plenty more Goldwater moments. Goldwater advocated, or uttered words giving the clear appearance that he advocated, using atomic weapons to defoliate the jungle covering the Ho Chi Minh Trail, giving NATO commanders discretion to use nuclear bombs as they saw fit, and making Social Security voluntary—a fairly far-out position to take at a time when the New Deal generation was still the dominant voting block. He proved so gifted at exposing his most alarming instincts that it was practically unnecessary for his opponent to attack him.

His opponent attacked him anyway. The other brilliant thing Johnson did as a campaigner, after making certain that voters identified him with his predecessor, was to turn the 1964 race into a referendum on nuclear policy. This was the purpose of his campaign's infamous daisy commercial, in which the image of a little girl pulling the petals off a daisy fades into the sound of a countdown and explosion and the image of a mushroom cloud, with the admonition to vote for Johnson on November 3rd: "The stakes are too high for you to stay home." The spot ran only once as a paid commercial—even Johnson found it excessive—but it was replayed so often on network news programs that something like forty million people saw it. This was the wound that did Goldwater in.

The commercial certainly had a point. Part of the reason Goldwater despised the notion that ideology doesn't matter was that he thought it made liberals soft on Communism. He took ideology to be the whole point of the Cold War, and there is no question of his militancy on the subject. He was one of nineteen senators to vote against the Test Ban Treaty. And, as Perlstein documents, he went on sounding like General Jack D. Ripper even after "Dr. Strangelove" came out, right in the middle of the New Hampshire primary. Anti-Communism was also undoubtedly the leading sentiment among many of the conservative groups, such as the John Birch Society—its leader, the candy manufacturer Robert Welch, believed that Eisenhower was a Communist agent—whose agitation helped seed the ground for the Goldwater insurgency. The decision to campaign against Goldwater as a dangerous warmonger seems logical today, but that is largely because of the effectiveness of the campaign. Goldwater is remembered as a man who proposed using nuclear weapons in Vietnam because that is how Lyndon Johnson wished him to be remembered. Most Americans who voted for Goldwater, though, did not do so because of his position on Vietnam and the worldwide Communist conspiracy. They voted for him because of his position on an issue that Johnson wanted to keep as far from the center of the campaign as he decently could. This was the issue of race.

There are (retrospectively, anyway) comic elements in the story of the Goldwater campaign, but at the heart of it is something tragic. The Senate voted on the Civil Rights Act on June 19, 1964. It was one of the most intense and closely watched congressional actions of the decade, and the most widely publicized vote of Goldwater's Senate career: he had just become the likely Republican Presidential nominee by winning the California primary, less than three weeks before. He voted against the bill. Two weeks later, Lyndon Johnson (who had pushed the legislation, he maintained, as a tribute to the memory of John F. Kennedy) signed it into law.

Most of the twenty-seven senators who voted against the Civil Rights Act were Southern segregationists. Goldwater was not a segregationist, nor was he any kind of racist. He was, in fact, a lifelong opponent of racial discrimination. At the beginning of his political career, as a city councilman, he had led the fight to end segregation in the Phoenix public schools; his first staff assistant when he went to the Senate, as Perlstein tells us, was a black woman; he was a member of the N.A.A.C.P. Goldwater voted against the Civil Rights Act because he believed, as a conservative, that the federal government did not have the power to compel states to conform to its idea of racial equality, or to dictate to individuals whom they must associate with.

The decision tormented him. Before the vote, he asked for advice from a political ally and speechwriter for his campaign, William Rehnquist, then a Phoenix attorney. Rehnquist assured him that the bill was unconstitutional. Goldwater sought a second opinion from another member of his brain trust, Robert Bork, then a law professor at Yale. Bork wrote a seventy-five-page concurrence. It was with a heavy heart (to borrow a phrase of L.B.J.'s) that Goldwater cast his vote on civil rights. He was, Perlstein says, "a shaken man afraid he was signing his political death warrant, convinced that the Constitution offered him no other honorable choice."

Two weeks after the Civil Rights Act became law, there was a riot in Harlem, followed by riots in black neighborhoods in three New Jersey cities, Philadelphia, Rochester, Cleveland, and a suburb of Chicago—the "long hot summer" of 1964. Those were not Southern cities. Johnson figured he had written off the Southern white vote by championing the Civil Rights Act, but the last thing he wanted was to allow issues like open housing and school desegregation to dominate his campaign in the North—which is why he chose to make war and peace the theme of the election.

Johnson was correct: he had thrown away the South. The only states Goldwater won (apart from his home state of Arizona, which he carried by less than a percentage point) were in the Deep South. He did not win them by a little. Goldwater took eighty-seven per cent of the vote in Mississippi. His campaign realigned the South: four of the five Southern states that he carried—Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, and Georgia—had gone to Adlai Stevenson eight years earlier. Eisenhower took forty per cent of the black vote in 1956; Nixon took thirty-two per cent in 1960. Goldwater got six per cent, and no Republican Presidential candidate since has equalled Nixon's percentage. George W. Bush, who made his convention a kind of diversity showcase, got eight per cent. Goldwater's longest-lasting political legacy was to drive African-Americans out of the party of Lincoln.

Goldwater did not want to campaign for the segregationist vote; he had even hoped that his personal opposition to discrimination would win him the votes of black people. But he had believed all along that the Southern white vote was basically conservative and potentially Republican. Republicans, he told Georgia activists in 1961, ought to stop chasing the votes of African-Americans and "go hunting where the ducks are." And the ducks in 1964 turned out to be white Democrats in revolt against integration. Goldwater's campaign slogan, "In Your Heart You

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Know He's Right," was an arrow aimed directly at them. It was a clear allusion to a prejudice that dared not speak its name.

All columnists should probably make it a rule to take off the week after a Presidential election. The temptation to prophecy is too distracting. An election, after all, is just a cup snatched from the stream of public opinion; while editorialists and commentators are peering into its depths, the river is rushing ceaselessly on. After the 1964 election, it did not seem likely that an alliance of single-issue voters—Southern segregationists and right-wing anti-Communists—could sustain a national party, because no one could have foreseen the combination of black militancy on civil rights and military futility in Vietnam that would split the Democratic Party. Liberals in 1964 thought that the Civil Rights Act would end racial strife, not (as it came to seem) inflame it; and Johnson had promised repeatedly, during the campaign, that he sought "no wider war" in Vietnam. Political predictions are generally based on the premise "If present trends continue," and it is in the nature of trends to change.

People did understand the 1964 election to mark a historic realignment; they just got the pieces backward. They believed that Goldwater's loss had aligned the Republican Party right out of the mainstream. In a Letter from Washington, in *The New Yorker*, datelined November 8, 1964, Richard Rovere asked if the Party could ever reconstitute itself. There are a few Republicans, he reported, "who think it can never be done, and not very many who think they will have more than half a party by 1968." Rovere tended to agree—he called his book on the election "The Goldwater Caper"—and most establishment columnists drew the same conclusion. Goldwater "has wrecked his party for a long time to come," James Reston informed readers of the *Times.*

It did not take a generation for this wisdom to be debunked. Goldwater's extremism and his success in the South disgusted Republican leaders in 1964—except one. Richard Nixon did not spurn the conservative grass-roots organization that Goldwater had put together to seize the nomination, and he learned from him the value of appealing to white anxiety about integration. Nixon did not carry the Deep South in 1968; George Wallace did. In a number of Southern states, Nixon ran behind Hubert Humphrey. But he put together a winning coalition for the Republican Party by attracting voters whose views the establishment considered reactionary and divisive. A year after Nixon's election, Kevin Phillips published his classic study "The Emerging Republican Majority," and there was suddenly a new paradigm for understanding the American electorate. You can see the difference Goldwater made to his party just by reading the list of politicians who once seemed to represent its ideological core and brightest political hopes, establishment darlings all: William Scranton, George Romney, Henry Cabot Lodge, Charles Percy, John Lindsay, Nelson Rockefeller. They have few heirs.

The politician who truly stands on the shoulders of Barry Goldwater is, of course, Ronald Reagan. During the campaign, Reagan sometimes opened or closed (occasionally opened *and* closed) on the bill with Goldwater. Audiences who found Goldwater edgy and aggressive found Reagan inspirational. And, on the Tuesday before the election, Reagan made his national political début with a spellbinding thirty-minute television commercial for Goldwater. It may not have won Goldwater many votes, but it put Reagan on the map. Two years later, he was elected governor of California, a state Johnson had carried by nearly 1.3 million votes.

Goldwater was uncharacteristically jealous. He never thanked Reagan for making the spot. But Reagan's effectiveness, as Perlstein shows, was the result of a strategy that would never have occurred to Goldwater or to his inflexibly doctrinaire campaign advisers. Reagan attacked the big-government policies of Franklin Roosevelt in what was in every other way a complete imitation of a Roosevelt fireside chat. He even used the New Deal phrase "rendezvous with destiny" to apostrophize the conservative crusade to end the era of New Deal-style government. He made small government sound just as warm and caring as big government. Reagan gave conservatism a human face, and this is why it makes more sense to call Goldwater a premonition rather than a cause of political change in America. A long stretch separates the Goldwater debacle of 1964 from the Reagan landslide of 1980, and one of the things that made that landslide possible was an accident of personality. Whatever their philosophical affinities, Reagan and Goldwater were, in one crucial area, as unalike as possible: Reagan was an actor.

Still, the tragedy of Barry Goldwater is also, in a sense, the tragedy of American conservatism, even in its moments of triumph. Goldwater's mistake was to believe that he could run for President on a program of political abstractions. People don't vote for abstractions. They vote their hopes and their fears, and they tend to see those in concrete terms. Twentieth-century American conservatism of the kind that Goldwater represented is the view that individuals, businesses, and local communities should have more control over their own destinies, and should not be subject to the bureaucratic dictates of a central government. As a proposition in political philosophy, there is no doubt much to be said for this view. Its appeal as a piece of campaign rhetoric obviously has everything to do with which bureaucratic dictates voters think you are talking about. What Goldwater discovered was that, in 1964, the philosophical language of conservatism was read by many voters as code for resistance to forced integration, and in the end he could not disentangle himself from an alliance that he had not desired. Many conservatives have found themselves in the same box. A political philosophy is not going to get very far without voters. As Goldwater observed, in politics you have to hunt where the ducks are. Most ducks are not interested in philosophy.

How accurate is the claim that the Goldwater campaign signalled the beginning of the end of the belief that government can solve social problems? The last Presidential election was essentially a contest between an advocate of smaller government and an advocate of active government. The advocate of smaller government is now President, it's true, but the advocate of active government got more votes. It still seems fair to say that it's not the principles most voters care about; it's the results. When, in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, big government seemed to be benefitting white Americans, they were generally liberal. Then, having got what they wanted, many of these people were willing to stuff the genie of big government back into the bottle. It seems unlikely, though, that they will throw away the bottle. ♦

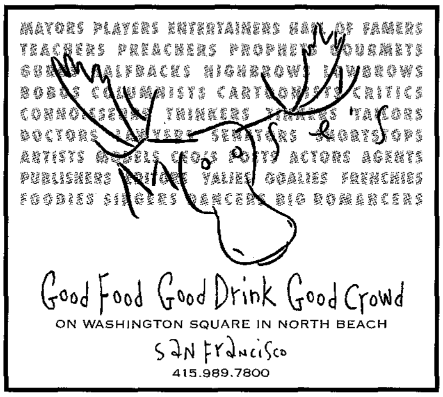
BRIEFLY NOTED

Island: The Complete Stories, *by Alistair MacLeod (Norton; $25.95).* The author, an expatriate from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, writes about his homeland and its dying traditions, in tales that marry the elemental themes of Gaelic song (loneliness, sorrow, work, death) with a simple but deceptively modern narrative style. In the course of the sixteen stories (presented in order of publication, from 1968 to 1999), MacLeod's spare style grows more artful, but the ache of loss is constant as he captures the direct eloquence of the islanders—the coal miners, lobstermen, farmers, and lighthouse keepers who know they are the last of their kind.

Goats, *by Mark Jude Poirier (Talk Miramax/Hyperion; $22).* Ellis Whitman's mother, Wendy, was a reckless hippie when he was born; now lost in Tucson's New Age-seminar subculture, she's startled when her only child chooses to leave their alternative life for the Northeastern boarding school once attended by his distant father, Fucker Frank. This swift-moving first novel renders Ellis's shift in parental allegiance unerringly, and shows, in damning detail, how little the adults around him have grown up since the seventies. But, despite plenty of action—including a roommate molested at gunpoint and a friend washed down an arroyo during a climactic border crossing—Poirier keeps this engaging coming-of-age story almost too safe; the reader regrets only that Ellis never does anything worth regretting.

Seabiscuit, *by Laura Hillenbrand (Random House; $24.95).* Horse stories are staples of young-adult fiction. Hillenbrand, a veteran equestrian writer, attempts something quite different: a full-length biography of the Thoroughbred Seabiscuit, a California racehorse who became one of the sporting world's biggest celebrities in the late thirties. Because her subject left behind few interesting interviews, the author fills out her portrait with people who helped guide Seabiscuit to glory: his owner, Charles Howard; his trainer, Tom Smith; and a hard-luck jockey named Red Pollard. While fans waited for a horse-to-horse showdown with War Admiral, the darling of the Eastern racing establishment, Seabiscuit set several records and battled various injuries. Unfortunately, many of the races are recounted in breathless, melodramatic prose. Far more interesting are the sections that detail the gruelling, hazardous life of a jockey; Pollard, a failed prizefighter with a taste for literature, emerges as the story's true hero.

Marguerite Duras, *by Laure Adler, translated from the French by Anne-Marie Glasheen (Chicago; $35).* Duras (1914-1996) lived an exemplary twentieth-century life: from French-colonial Indochina to wartime Paris; from the Communist Party to the riots of May, 1968; from an adolescent affair with a wealthy patron to a lasting relationship with a homosexual man some forty years her junior. She transfigured these experiences into gaunt, poetic fictions, many of which she couched in essaylike meditations on the struggle to produce them. Though Adler interviewed Duras herself at length and had access to her private papers, this admiring but unflinching biography is based largely on remarkably frank interviews with longtime intimates of Duras after her death. The biographer's evidence of her subject's manipulations of fact in her fictions makes for a not unpleasant sense of illicit insight. Even for readers unfamiliar with the novels in question, the stories that Adler carefully reconstructs—particularly Duras's high-wire wartime dalliance with a Gestapo agent and her fight for literary recognition through years of sexual obsession and alcoholic haze—are as gripping as the works they inspired.



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THE THEATRE

IMMODEST PROPOSALS

"Design for Living" and "Lobby Hero"—life among the high and the hoi polloi.

BY JOHN LAHR

In 1932, the year before Noël Coward's "Design for Living"—his then scandalous tale of an insouciant ménage à trois—was first mounted in New York, Coward wrote the song "Let's Live Dangerously," which captured in two lines the spirit that took him two windy acts to incarnate: "Let's live boisterously, boisterously, roisterously / Let's lead moralists the devil of a dance." The song is more or less a mission statement of Coward's comedy: to drive the bourgeoisie crazy with the imperialism of his talent. At thirty-two, Coward was already, in his own words, "the belle of the ball." He had shed his lower-middle-class origins for a de-luxe persona, and in all his public guises—songwriter, performer, playwright, personality—fostered the myth of a British talentocracy in which he was queen of the worker bees. By 1932, when the average British wage was about a hundred pounds a year, Coward had an annual income of fifty thousand pounds; he was the richest writer in England, with George Bernard Shaw and A. A. Milne trailing second and third. Coward was feeling invincible, and "Design for Living," which the Roundabout is reviving at the American Airlines Theatre, is a gigantic raspberry blown from the empyrean of his fame at the plebes and the Pecksniffs of the world.

Originally written as a vehicle for Coward and the Lunts—one of Broadway's most famous acting couples—the comedy brazenly asserts the century's new gospel of celebrity. "Let's be photographed and interviewed and pointed at in restaurants! Let's play the game for all it's worth!" the successful playwright Leo (Dominic West) crows to his bosom buddy, the successful painter Otto (Alan Cumming), after both are jilted by their muse and inamorata, Gilda (Jennifer Ehle), on the second of three laps of Coward's sexual merry-go-round. Coward's own spectacular sense of separation from society—"I am related to no one except myself"—is consolidated in the unrepentant trio, who wear their bohemianism like a badge of honor. In their self-indulgent bubble, they take individualism to its extreme.

"Look at the whole thing as a sideshow," Gilda tries to explain to their mutual friend, the well-named Ernest—whom she later briefly marries. "People pay to see freaks. Walk up! Walk up and see the Fat Lady and the Monkey Man and the Living Skeleton and the Three Famous Hermaphrodites!" But the freakishness that Coward is actually justifying (and disguising) is not so much his selfishness as his homosexuality. "From now on we shall have to live and die our own way," Gilda tells "little Ernest," leaving him in the lurch after their two-year marriage and returning to her beloved ménage. "No one else's way is any good, we don't fit."

In Coward's comedies of bad manners, frivolity jams the frequency of moral outrage. At the finale, Ernest (John Cunningham, in superb high dudgeon) calls them "worthless degenerates" without "a decent instinct among the lot of you." He exits spitting spiders. "Why should you have the monopoly of noise?" Leo crows back. "Why should your pompous moral pretensions be allowed to hurtle across this city without any competition? We've all got lungs; let's use them! Let's shriek like mad! Let's enjoy ourselves!" With normality now banished, the three collapse on a sofa in self-congratulatory hilarity. The stage direction reads, "They groan and weep with laughter; their laughter is still echoing from the walls as—the curtain falls." It is the sound of frivolity's vindictive triumph—all the more provocative for being voiced in the depths of the Depression.

To be great, comedy must be cruel, and that is why it is usually written by the young; the ruthless heart has yet to be humbled by loss or by a sense of an ending. In the line of wit to which Coward's comedies belong, for instance, Sheridan ("The School for Scandal") was twenty-six; Congreve ("The Way of the World") was thirty; Orton ("What the Butler Saw") was thirty-four; and Wilde ("The Importance of Being Earnest") was a positively decrepit forty-one. "Design for Living," however, is more a lecture masquerading as theatre; it's too schematic and too self-important for the cruelty to play out in surprising ways.

Here, although the director Joe Mantello has encouraged the scenic designer Robert Brill to go gargantuan with the sets, as a kind of metaphor for the characters' grandiosity, it's a choice that unwittingly emphasizes the gimcrack quality of the play's structure. Otherwise, the production is superbly cast and well focussed. Jennifer Ehle—the next new big thing, in my view—doesn't shrink from Gilda's cruelty but creates a fretful, manic, vivid inner world for her character. As she leaves her men, singly and in groups, her restless dissatisfaction forces hurt into their slaphappy partnership, and frees the play from the aspic of British high-comedy mannerisms in which it is usually preserved. As Leo, Dominic West, with his matinée-idol profile, plays well opposite Alan Cumming, who persuasively turns Otto into a kind of wide-eyed bohemian pixie. (His only gauche note is a pierced eyebrow, which manages to skew an entire set and all its period décor.)

At one point in the play, when Leo and Gilda are living together, Leo says, "Doesn't the Eye of Heaven mean anything to you?" Gilda replies, "Only when it winks." Unfortunately, in "Design for Living" Coward is finger-wagging, not winking. His genius was for style. He was not a thinker. (At the mere suggestion, Sean O'Casey exclaimed, "Mother o' God!") Of all Coward's comedies, this is his least effective; its alchemical balance—that combustible mixture of aggression and pleasure—is off. That said, as an early witness to the spiritual attrition of fame, the play has a pleasurable monstrousness, and this production makes the most of it. As a Harburg-Arlen parody of the play observed, a couple of years later, "We're living in the smart upper sets. / Let other lovers

Coward's unrepentant threesome wear their bohemianism like a badge of honor. Photograph by Chris Callis.

sing their duets. / Duets are made for the bourgeoisie-oh / But only God can make a trio."

None of the schmendricks in Kenneth Lonergan's "Lobby Hero," at Playwrights Horizons, have the luck of talent, or the luck of anything else. They're eager for life to happen, but they haven't much equipment to deal with it. Here, for instance, in the bright banality of a lobby in a Manhattan apartment house, the security guard, Jeff (Glenn Fitzgerald, his hands flapping in a semaphore of uncertainty), ponders why, after only a few tokes of marijuana, he was caught and dishonorably discharged from the Navy. His ambitious black boss, William (Dion Graham), is a rules freak who is forced to jeopardize his career by lying to the police in order to keep his brother—the probable murderer of a mother of three—out of jail. Into this equation Lonergan factors two hapless cops: sleazy Bill (well played by Tate Donovan) and inept Dawn (the uncannily funny Heather Burns). Bill has parked his rookie partner—and lover—in the lobby while he has a *cinq à sept* upstairs. Dawn, who as the curtain rises has more or less taken the eye out of a man she mistakenly thought was attacking her, is about to have her heart broken.

In another era, these contrivances would have been called hokum; but because Lonergan is the writer and director of the moving and successful film "You Can Count on Me" and the author of the highly praised plays "This Is Our Youth" and "The Waverly Gallery," the public is expecting him to aim high. Instead, even more galling for a man of his gifts, Lonergan aims low and misses. ♦

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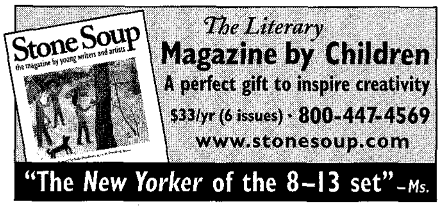

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DANCING

JUMP, FLY, AND WAIL

Hong Kong moves find an Amerian audience.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Ang Lee's "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" received ten Academy Award nominations. If there were a category for movement direction, the movie would surely have got eleven, for nothing is more central to its beauty and coherence than its fight sequences, created by Hong Kong's foremost action choreographer, Yuen Wo Ping. Yuen comes from an action-movie clan. The family started out in Chinese opera, then moved into film. Yuen's father made his living in martial-arts cinema, as do four of Yuen's brothers. (One of them, Cheung Yan, directed the fight scenes for the new "Charlie's Angels.") Yuen got his start as a stuntman in the pictures his father was working on. He was always the guy who died, he told the London *Guardian*. "I was very good at falling down dead."

Hong Kong movies are made fast. As director or fight choreographer, Yuen, now fifty-five years old, has made fifty-odd movies. He specialized in historical epics, cop movies, and swashbucklers. These are all conventional forms, but eventually he began bending the conventions. He directed two of Jackie Chan's earliest movies, and made him a star by turning him into a *comic* kung-fu master, as opposed to the grim Bruce Lee model. Two years ago, as the choreographer on "The Matrix," Yuen entered the lists of American action movies, and lent that exploding-skyscraper genre a little stylishness by teaching kung-fu to Keanu Reeves, and by subjecting the cast to "wirework," a Hong Kong extra whereby the fighters are attached to wires, like Peter Pan, so that they can move upward as well as in the usual directions. (The wires are digitally erased from the print.) At one point in "The Matrix," Keanu Reeves, standing on a subway track and happening to notice that a train is bearing down on him, levitates about ten feet into the air, does a backflip, and alights on the subway platform. All of us would like to do this, and such feats leaven the film's violence with a sort of joy.

Yuen has been using wirework for a while now. And, "The Matrix" notwithstanding, he is making it serve purposes beyond excitement. "I am more into the softer styles," he told an interviewer recently, "rather than the hard, fast cut-cut-cut of a lot of movies, so I use the wire to bring that out." By producing a longer arc of action, wirework allows for longer takes—hence, expansion, afterthoughts, fantasy.

The moody lyricism of "Crouching Tiger" is not all Yuen's. Ang Lee has said that what he wanted was "kind of a dream of China," and he got it. The story takes place in the seventeenth century. The central character is a highborn girl, Jen Yu (Zhang Ziyi), who is about to be married off to a rich man. She wants no part of him, however. All she wants is a life of love and adventure, the life of an *wuxia*, or Chinese knight-errant. The characters grouped around her, notably Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun Fat), an exemplary *wuxia*, and Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh), his beloved, exist to show her that the life of daring she longs for is an illusion.

Strange to say, that lesson is taught primarily through the fight scenes. Some, admittedly, are there just for the sheer Hong Kong fun of it. We get the kung-fu repertoire—the twirling kicks and aerial flips—and also the marvellous weaponry. (I especially liked the shoes with retractable knives.) Then there is the wirework, allowing the combatants to perform all manner of aviational maneuvers and, once the foe is gasping in the dirt, to zoom off into the sky, trailing, in one scene, a great helix of ribbons. The ribbons are for the ladies. In "Crouching Tiger," as in much of Hong Kong cinema, the women are as serious about martial arts as the men. (When Jen asks the soulful beauty Shu Lien if she is a swordfighter, she answers, "Yes, I am, but I prefer the machete.") None of the movie's fights show a man in sole combat

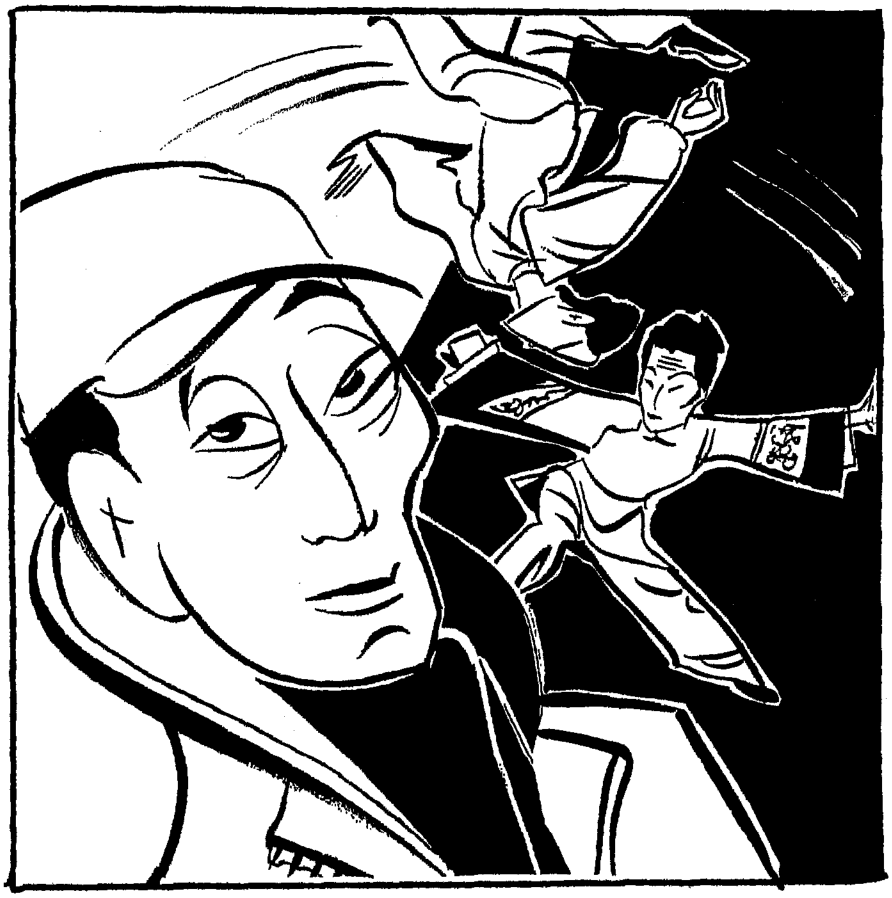
TOM BACHTELL

with a man. Always, there is a woman.

One skirmish in particular, in which Jen, disguised as a boy, takes on a whole restaurant full of hoodlums, seems designed to satisfy Hong Kong expectations. As it starts, Jen, holding her teacup in one hand, fights a man with the other hand, and doesn't spill a drop. Then she gets annoyed—her meal has been interrupted—and, putting down her tea, she single-handedly battles about fifty more men, meanwhile vaulting from balcony to balcony and somersaulting backward down a staircase. She ends by chanting a little ode to her prowess and performing a dance—a real dance, to the beat. She twirls her sword like a baton, does a *grand battement*, then twirls the sword some more, pirouetting all the while, and ends in an exclamatory posture, her arm raised to Heaven. In honor of her performance, a balcony crashes sonorously to the floor. If Donald O'Connor had been Chinese, this is a routine he might have done.

But the other fights in "Crouching Tiger" are more abstemious, more symbolic. The settings, to start with, are fantastic—moonlit courtyards, desert dunes—and fantastically filmed. Drums sound, adding to the mystery. The most amazing encounter, as the reviewers noticed, takes place between Jen and Mu Bai in a bamboo forest. The forest is green, green—a green you never imagined—and it looks like fur, it's so thick. Into this surrealist medium fly Jen and Mu Bai, like white birds. Their combat takes place in the trees, which are swaying in the wind. Not many blows are struck; not many can be, because the antagonists are too busy trying to keep their footing on the trunks of the bending bamboos. (Normally, in wired scenes, Yuen uses about fifteen technicians. For this scene he needed a crew of forty.) If "Crouching Tiger" is a dream of China, this fight is a dream of kung-fu. The camera pauses for closeups: Mu Bai standing on a branch with the calm of a Buddha, Jen falling backward in what looks like an erotic trance. Everything is slow, ruminative.

"Crouching Tiger" is about honor and feeling, and it is primarily for the sake of those matters that we have the wires: to take the movie *up*, to higher things. Most of the wirework is not what you would call dancing. The filmmakers may digitally erase the wires, but they cannot erase the wires' effects. We see the yank as the actors are lifted into the air. When they come down, we see them struggle for their land legs. Actually, wirework is the opposite of dancing, which is a constant negotiation with the very force of gravity that the wires cancel out. (In ballet, the reason a jump is exciting is that the dancer is going up, and staying up, when gravity wants her to come down.) And how much can human beings do in the air? They can stretch their arms out to make them look like wings; they can point their toes to make them look pretty. If they're in an alley, they can smack their feet against the masonry, to make it seem as though they were climbing the walls. But that's about it.



Yuen Wo Ping choreographed "The Matrix" and "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon."

So the wirework is limited, and also artificial, but, like other artifices—head voices in opera, point work in ballet—it can create a poetic image, and give things a certain lilt and unexpectedness. Looking at "Crouching Tiger," I thought a little bit about Tao, and a lot more about the movies. I thought about silent comedy. (Keaton and Chaplin were better movement artists than anyone in "Crouching Tiger.") I thought about the musicals of the thirties, and how the dance numbers delivered the kind of fantasy—pure, transporting, nonrealistic—that people want from cinema. That fantasy is still being delivered, but not by musicals. (The last really good movie musical, "West Side Story," was made in 1961.) It is the action movies that are producing it. Most action films are very stupid—including "The Matrix," despite Yuen's efforts—but they are giving people something they desperately want on Saturday night, and that is why they are so popular.

Kung-fu movies are an odd place to look for the salvation of cinema. Nothing could be more formulaic, or more gone-in-a-second. And nothing could be more low-class. Every time I have seen a kung-fu movie, it has been in a theatre where your shoes stick to the floor. But often it is humble genres such as this—forms unprotected by rules and history, so that brave minds can attach to them and do something interesting—that take us into a new place. In the eighteenth century, the novel was such a genre. Likewise photography in the nineteenth century, and cinema itself in the early twentieth. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

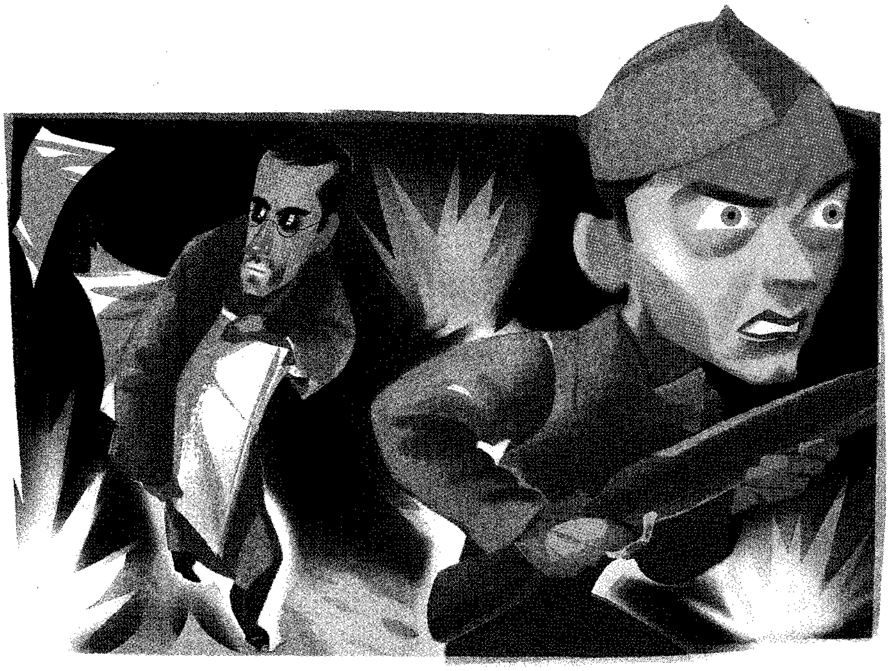
CROSSFIRE

Dodging bullets in Stalingrad and on the streets of New York.

BY DAVID DENBY

There's one good stretch in "Enemy at the Gates"—one stretch of ten minutes or so when this enormous, violent, but weirdly impacted war movie achieves something like grandeur. It comes right at the beginning. Jude Law, playing the real-life Red Army sharpshooter Vassili Zaitsev, stands in a packed freight car; Vassili is one of thousands of Soviet soldiers rushed to the besieged city of Stalingrad in the autumn of 1942, and Law, with his long face and prominent cheekbones, the golden hair of "The Talented Mr. Ripley" well covered by a cap, seems, at that moment, less like a glamorous movie star than a lean young fighter from the country. We're eager to believe in him. The train comes to a halt, and the terrified soldiers get pulled out of the cars and pushed into small boats crossing the Volga to the city on the other side, which is burning from a hundred fires. As German fighter planes strafe the boats, soldiers jump over the side to save themselves, and get shot in the water by Soviet security officers. On the docks, which are under heavy shelling, people run wildly in every direction, and the men are handed rifles and thrown into battle—forced to run directly into German fire in a wide-open city square. Those who turn back are machine-gunned by their superiors. At Stalingrad, the Soviets hurled thousands of poorly armed and untrained soldiers against the Germans, and the movie captures the amazing cruelty of the sacrifice. It's as if the Red Army wanted to exhaust German ammunition by taking the bullets into the bodies of its own men.

The German airplanes, digitized into existence, appear too flimsy and lightweight, their maneuvering too abrupt. Yet the sweep of the big-screen compositions remains impressive, and for those ten minutes I was stunned by the swirling turmoil and violence, the sense of many people dying at once in the ravaged city. The director, Jean-Jacques Annaud, doesn't hold on to his crowded shots; he shows us a little more than we can take in, and the editing hurries us along. The pace is frantic, burdened, frightening. Stalingrad is not just under siege; it has been occupied and torn up, and its guts—ducts, room interiors, sewers—spill out into the common ruin like the contents of a laundry hamper. On the soundtrack, the composer James Horner does an acceptable imitation of Shostakovich's agonized wartime urgency.



Joseph Fiennes and Jude Law in "Enemy at the Gates."

But after these early sequences the impressiveness comes to a halt. "Enemy at the Gates" turns out to be one of those international hybrids—in this case, a German-English-Irish co-production, made at a reported cost of up to eighty-five million dollars—in which almost nothing works. Annaud, who wrote the screenplay with his longtime collaborator, Alain Godard, re-created Stalingrad in shabby industrial towns in the former East Germany, and he used hundreds, perhaps thousands, of extras. Yet he was unable to pull together anything of dramatic interest—even a single character we might care about. Vassili Zaitsev, who grew up hunting wolves in the Urals, goes on sniping forays through Stalingrad, and shoots dozens of German officers. He's turned into a national hero by the Soviet political operative Danilov (Joseph Fiennes), a Marxist-Jewish intellectual who churns out rhapsodic propaganda for the motherland: Vassili is lionized by Stalin himself and bear-hugged by Khrushchev (Bob Hoskins), who arrives in Stalingrad in a foul mood and takes over the defense of the city. The Soviets are losing the war; they need heroes, even sniper heroes, and Khrushchev has his man. But if the Soviets needed a virtuous sniper, does that mean that we do, too? The actual Vassili was credited with picking off more than two hundred Germans, but the movie's presentation of him is not all that different from Danilov's kitschy mythmaking—he's gentle and considerate, a good man with nothing of the practiced killer in his manner. Jude Law is quite charming, but the performance never goes beyond the promising early shots of him in the train, and as I watched I remembered that Annaud, the director of "Quest for Fire," "The Lover," and "Seven Years in Tibet," often gets more from his landscapes than he does from his actors. There's a girl (Rachel Weisz)—a young Soviet intellectual and warrior—whom Vassili and

Danilov struggle over, but she, too, seems to have come right off a wartime poster. The movie rejects Stalinist brutality but haplessly embraces Stalinist aesthetic simplicities. The actors speak English in their own accents, and since the writing is commonplace—without flavor or idiosyncrasy—no one seems at home. These are not Russians and Germans, but they're not anything else, either.

Jude Law has sharpshooter eyes, and so does Ed Harris, who shows up as a big-deal Wehrmacht sniper, Major Konig, an unnervingly silent aristocratic hunter from the Black Forest (or is it the Saxony woods?). The movie turns into a duel between the unaffected peasant boy and the viciously refined Nazi killer, who smokes gold-tipped cigarettes and displays—big surprise—contempt for humanity. In scene after scene, they stalk each other, hiding in the rubble. But at that point the movie epic dies, and the entire project becomes inert and senseless. Snipers are a part of every war, but they play an ignoble and usually minor role—I doubt that they ever seriously affect the outcome of a battle. In "Enemy at the Gates," as thousands of people are dying, these two vain specialists fight a private war. This kind of advanced schoolyard game might have been perversely interesting if the absurdity of it had become the point. We might in that case have got caught up in it as a kind of sick joke. But Annaud makes it seem as if the Battle of Stalingrad—and, beyond that, the entire war—hung on the duel. He mistakes his own movie conceit for an event of shattering importance, and after a while one begins to hope that the two men will plug each other simultaneously, so the affair will at last be over.

As the pointlessness becomes oppressive, the setting becomes oppressive, too—and unconvincing. The broken city is all brown and gray muck; the soldiers are unshaven and pale; the corpses drained of color. And yet, despite all this crafted verisimilitude, I began to feel, after the opening scenes, that I was looking at a movie set. The filth is too artfully arranged and too uniform; it's been color-coördinated for appallingness, and since the narrative never takes hold, we have plenty of time to notice how decorative the junk is. Annaud can't seem to stage a scene in a way that creates any excitement. The snipers are hidden and still, and we lose the primitive satisfaction of watching men and forces move across terrain. Big movies, even war epics, have their definite pleasures, but Annaud is an inadequate general. Only extreme vanity and strategic blindness could account for the error of shooting a project of this size without a vivid, colloquial script. Annaud and his collaborators sacrificed money, not men, but their wastefulness begins to rival the Red Army's.

John Herzfeld's "15 Minutes" is the most entertaining piece of hyperbolic trash I've seen in months. Herzfeld ("Two Days in the Valley") has a near-hysterical restlessness that carries him over the top again and again, but there's life and fun in this pulse-of-the-city thriller, much of which is staged in and around the media pits of Times Square. Two recent émigrés set the madness in motion—a Czech psychopath (Karel Roden), who takes the promise of American freedom with alarming literalness, and a movie-loving Russian (Oleg Taktarov), who films his partner's crimes with a stolen videocamera. These two muttoncakes are pursued by a celebrated police detective (Robert De Niro) and a young fire marshal (Edward Burns), who becomes his protégé. Herzfeld serves up fires and knifings and shoot-outs, but, in the midst of the mayhem, he manages to hammer away at the American habit of turning criminals into media figures—the villain of the piece is a sensationalizing newscaster (Kelsey Grammer) who airs the Russian's film. The trouble with "15 Minutes," of course, is that Herzfeld is so eager to put blood on the screen that he can't extricate himself from the media morbidity that he knows is corrupt—the movie sells the same violence that it puts TV down for selling. But at least he brings humor and rhythm to what he's doing, and with a more disciplined script he might someday step out of the trap he's in now. ♦

The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for six combined issues: Feb. 19 & 26, Apr. 23 & 30, June 18 & 25, Aug. 20 & 27, Oct. 15 & 22, Dec. 24 & 31) by The Condé Nast Publications Inc. (4 Times Square, N.Y., N.Y. 10036), which is a subsidiary of Advance Publications, Inc. Vol. LXXVII, No. 5, March 26, 2001. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The New Yorker, Box 56447, Boulder, CO 80328-6447. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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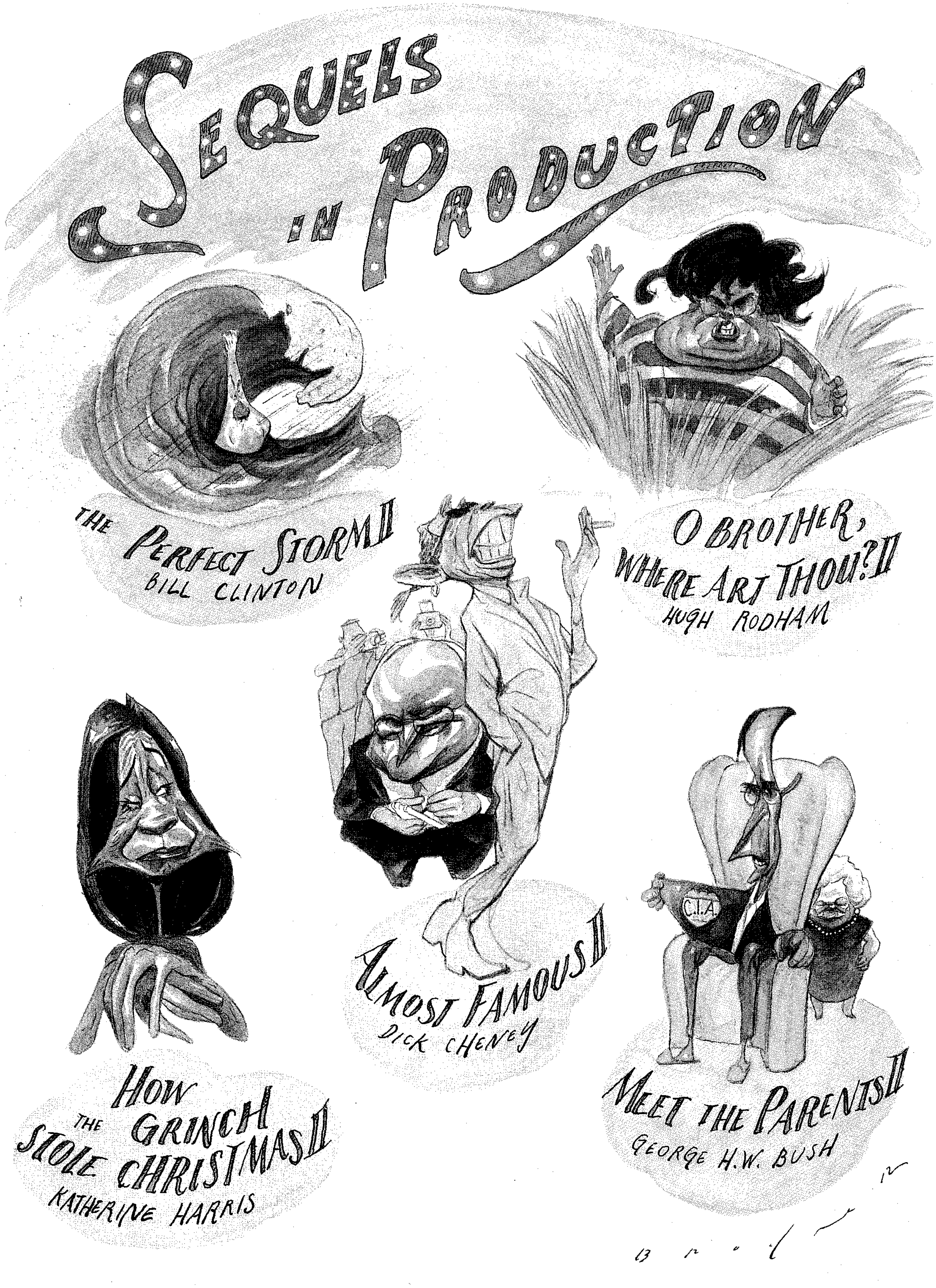
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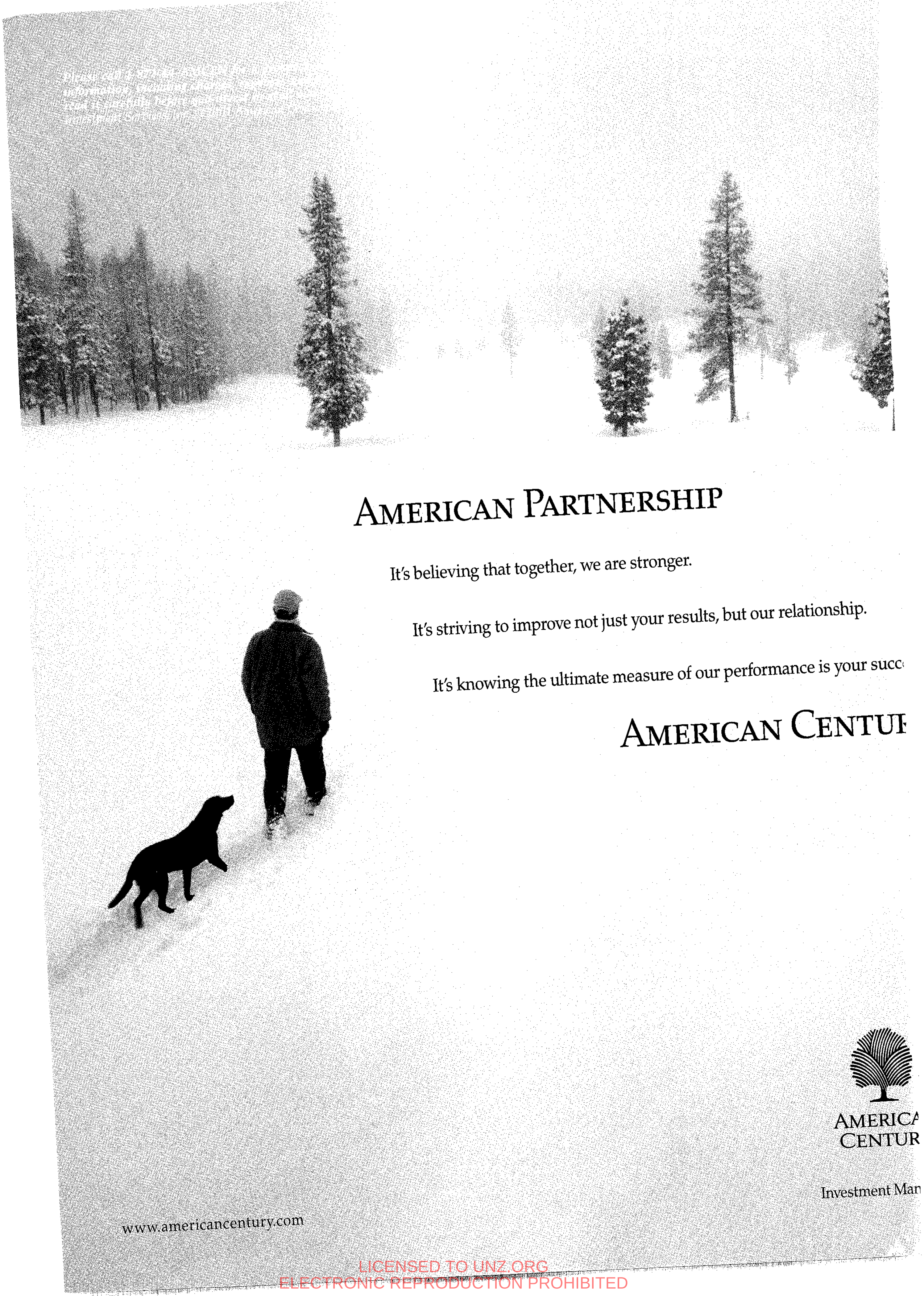

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